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The Nineteenth Century Origins of Counterinsurgency Doctrine

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ABSTRACT In counterinsurgency, the population is the center of gravity. This insight has become a key doctrinal tenet of modern armed conflict. But where does it come from? The *razzia*, a tactic introduced by the French in North Africa around 1840, first thrust tribal populations into the focus of modern operational thinking. Soon the pioneering *bureaux arabes* added an administrative, civil, and political element. Eventually, in the 1890s, French operations in Madagascar gave rise to a mature counterinsurgency doctrine. David Galula, a French writer who heavily influenced the American *Counterinsurgency* manual, is merely the joint that connects the nineteenth century to the twenty-first.

KEY WORDS: Counterinsurgency, French Nineteenth-Century Colonial Campaigns, Algeria, Madagascar, Lyautey, Galliéni, Galula

Counterinsurgency is a military activity centered on civilians. The counterinsurgent competes against the insurgent for the trust and the support of the uncommitted, civilian population. These assumptions have become a core conceptual foundation of today's counterinsurgency debate and doctrine. The publication of a much-discussed US manual in December 2006, so-called FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*, prepared the ground for a fundamental reorientation of the use and the utility of force. Then, in 2008, the United States Army updated its most elemental capstone doctrine, Field Manual 3-0 *Operations*. It recognized and consolidated a 'revolutionary departure from past doctrine', its foreword announced. Modern wars are 'increasingly fought "among the people"', General William Wallace wrote there. In more detail:

Previously, we sought to separate people from the battlefield so that we could engage and destroy enemies and seize terrain. While we recognize our enduring requirement to fight and win, we also

recognize that people are frequently part of the terrain and their support is a principal determinant of success in future conflicts.¹

Wallace's carefully pronounced 'previously' hints at a historical trend that is as old as modern, industrial-age armies: the professionalization of military organizations, so succinctly described in Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*.² Officers became specialists in planning, equipping, training, and using industrial force to fight one another. The battlefield, in Winston Churchill's words, turned into 'a common professional meeting ground between military men'.³ Political affairs, be it in capitals or in theater, ceased to be the prerogative of officers who were trained as apolitical experts in the 'management of violence',⁴ not public administration. Against this background, the current shift appears remarkable and perhaps indeed revolutionary. So it is highly desirable to better understand the emergence of the military focus on the civilian population in theater. What are the roots of population-centric operations?

This article will examine the historical origins the civilian population in counterinsurgency theory and practice by going back to the French experience between 1840 and 1900. In contrast to British imperialism, French colonial expansion in the nineteenth century was largely military-driven.⁵ One important joint that connects the nineteenth century to the twenty-first is Lieutenant Colonel David Galula (1919–67), an influential albeit overrated French officer and author. In the closing days of French imperialism, officers like Galula took many theoretical lessons for granted that had been distilled from more than a century of practice. Against that background, many of today's ideas are far less innovative and 'revolutionary' than is often assumed. Indeed much can be learned for today's population-centric operations by looking more closely at nineteenth century colonial campaigns.

¹US Army, *Operations*, FM 3-0 (2008), p.0.

²Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1957).

³Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (London: Houghton Mifflin 1986), 15.

⁴Harold Lasswell, 'The Garrison State and Specialists on Violence', *American Journal of Sociology* 46 (Jan. 1941), 455–68.

⁵For a general treatment of this period, see Douglas Porch, *The March to the Marne. The French Army 1871–1914* (Cambridge: CUP 1981); Douglas Porch, 'Bugeard, Galliéni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare', in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton UP 1986), 376–407; specifically on the Army, see Alexander Sydney Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan* (Cambridge: CUP 1969).

Galula

The military focus on the population is usually traced back to David Galula's publications. In 1956–58, this French officer served in Algeria's mountainous Kabylia region as a company commander with the 45th Colonial Infantry Battalion. He later published two books in English that summed up his experience in Algeria. Both were republished with prominent forewords in 2006: *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, originally published in 1964, was introduced by John Nagl, one of the US Army's most-respected thinkers on counterinsurgency. *Pacification in Algeria* was presented by Bruce Hoffman, then a leading terrorism expert at the RAND Corporation.⁶ The former French company commander subsequently became one of the most quoted sources in General David Petraeus' *Counterinsurgency* field manual as well as in the wider debate on the subject. More than one time the manual quotes Galula at length:

To confine soldiers to purely military functions while urgent and vital tasks have to be done, and nobody else is available to undertake them, would be senseless. The soldier must then be prepared to become ... a social worker, a civil engineer, a school-teacher, a nurse, a boy scout. But only for as long as he cannot be replaced, for it is better to entrust civilian tasks to civilians.⁷

Victory in a counterinsurgency war, for Galula, was conditional on the isolation of the insurgent from the population, an isolation not enforced by external actors but maintained by and with the population. Paraphrasing Galula, the manual and its authors coined memorable expressions, for instance that counterinsurgency operations could be characterized as 'armed social work'⁸ or that the population would be 'the prize'.⁹

Such catchphrases proved helpful. When the US land forces were operationally and conceptually confused with a deteriorating situation in Iraq, Galula offered some fresh thoughts on how to succeed in a

⁶David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger 1964); David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria 1956–1958*, MG-478-1 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp. 1963). Stephen T. Hosmer and Sibylle O. Crane, *Counterinsurgency: A Symposium, April 16–20, 1962* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp. 1963) and David Galula, 'Subversion and Insurgency in Asia', in Alistair Buchan (ed.), *China and the Peace of Asia* (New York: Praeger 1965), 175–84.

⁷US Army and US Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3–24 (2006), 2–9.

⁸*Ibid.*, A7.

⁹David Kilcullen, 'Counter-insurgency Redux', *Survival* 48/4 (Winter 2006–07), 111–30.

confusing and stressful environment (although his army did not succeed in Algeria). 'Of the many books that were influential in the writing of Field Manual 3-24', the foreword the manual's commercial edition explains, 'perhaps none was as important as David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*.'¹⁰ The 99-page booklet, written as a research associate at Harvard University's Center of International Affairs in 1962/63, reflects the author's experiences in Algeria and other theaters. Capturing the mood so enthralled with Galula's ideas when Petraeus' doctrine was published in late 2006, one military historian even called him the 'Clausewitz of counterinsurgency'.¹¹ His book became mandatory reading at the US Army's Command and General Staff College.¹²

Although Galula's writings contain well-developed and interesting ideas, they stand out in two aspects: his books went unnoticed in France and most of Europe for decades; Galula even remained largely unknown even among experts on irregular warfare in France in 2007.¹³ After all the author only had been an infantry company commander in a rather unremarkable sector called Djebel Aissa Mimoun, an impoverished five square-mile patch northeast of the small city of Tizi Ouzou. Galula's sector had 15,000 inhabitants scattered in small villages with '80 to 100' insurgents at the most.¹⁴ Galula only published one book in French, under the pseudonym of Jean Caran, *Les moustaches du tigre*, a little known and rather raunchy novel about a strip club.¹⁵ The reasons for the disguise remain unclear.¹⁶ Galula's *magnum opus*, propelled to fame in the United States in 2006, was published in French

¹⁰David H. Petraeus, John A. Nagl, James F. Amos, and Sarah Sewall, *The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual FM 3-24* (Univ. of Chicago Press 2007), xix. For a similar assessment and more details, see Conrad Crane, 'United States', in Thomas Rid and Thomas Keaney (eds) *Understanding Counterinsurgency* (London: Routledge 2010), 59-72.

¹¹Max Boot, 'Keys to a successful surge', *Los Angeles Times*, 7 Feb. 2007.

¹²Although Galula is certainly treated as a major influence today, it should be noted that both the US Army and the Marine Corps started focusing doctrinally – but not in practice – on the population already in the early 1960s, well before Galula came to America. Austin Long, *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence*, Occasional Paper (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp. 2008), 5-9.

¹³Author interviews at the Centre de doctrine d'emploi des forces, Paris, 2006/07.

¹⁴Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 40.

¹⁵'David Galula, 48, French Army Aide', *New York Times*, 12 May 1967, 47; David Galula (as Jean Caran), *Les moustaches du tigre* (Paris: Flammarion 1965).

¹⁶It is unlikely but not impossible that Galula had 'connections' to the French terrorist group *Organisation de l'armée secrète* (OAS) which had tried to assassinate General de Gaulle, see for instance Erich Wulff, *Vietnamesische Lehrjahre: Bericht eines Arztes aus Vietnam 1961-1967* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1972), 344. Archival work is needed to

only in 2008, although it had been translated from English into Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish, and Chinese in the mid-1960s.¹⁷

The second noteworthy element, which explains the first, is that Galula's military writings were hardly innovative. They rest on more than a century of well-documented French experience with irregular warfare and counterinsurgency in North Africa and elsewhere. What was considered 'revolutionary' in the United States in 1964 and again in 2006 was rather *evolutionary* in France: the outcome of more than 130 years of colonial campaigns that began in Algeria in 1830 and ended in Algeria in 1962, culminating in a rich if idiosyncratic debate in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁸ French officers to this day are more likely to read Marshals Galliéni (1849–1916) or Lyautey (1854–1925), whose operations succeeded, not an obscure company commander whose war was a bitter defeat.¹⁹ Much of Galula's writings only repeated in English what had long been common knowledge in French. Military thinking during the *Belle Époque* is therefore a crucial backdrop to understand Galula, and by extension today's counterinsurgency doctrine.

The argument is organized in three steps. First the *razzia* illustrates how the population became the focus of French operational thinking in North Africa around 1840. Soon the pioneering *bureaux arabes* – which can be seen as a historic precursor to recent approaches to local capacity building – added a constructive element. And eventually, at the end of the century, French operations in Madagascar gave rise to a mature counterinsurgency strategy that put the population front and center.

The Razzia

An innovative tactic known as 'razzia' was a crucial stepping-stone in the ascent of the civilian population in modern military thought.²⁰ In the 1830s the French conquerors of North Africa adapted an old practice of pre-Islamic Bedouin societies, the *ghazya*, or raid – a colloquial Arabic word that entered the French language through

assess this claim. Galula resigned from the Army to join Houston & Hotchkiss, an electric company in Paris.

¹⁷David Galula, *Contre-insurrection: Théorie et pratique* (Paris: Economica 2008).

¹⁸The debate was also influenced by anti-communism and therefore departed in some ways from earlier assumptions. For an overview and a detailed bibliography, see Peter Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria* (New York: Praeger 1964). Paret did not mention Galula.

¹⁹For an example, see the references in Centre de Doctrine d'Emploi des Forces, 'Doctrine de Contre-Rébellion', Paris, Jan. 2009.

²⁰The *razzia* has been curiously neglected by historians and scholars of strategy. For the most detailed account in English, see Thomas Rid, 'Razzia. A Turning Point in Modern Strategy', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21/4 (Oct. 2009), 617–35.

transliteration at that time as ‘*razzia*.’ In some Bedouin nomadic societies the *ghazya* ‘might almost be described as the national sport’, wrote William Montgomery Watt, a doyen of Islamic studies.²¹ In marauding expeditions clansmen seized camels, goats, and livestock from other tribes, but loss of life was rare. An example may be the best way to introduce the tactic as adopted by the French Army.

Marshal Thomas Robert Bugeaud (1784–1849), Commander-in-Chief in Algeria since December 1840, instructed his commanders to crush a local insurgency that irked the French in the winter of 1846. On 21 January 1847, Colonel Armand de Saint-Arnaud ordered one of his officers, Lieutenant Colonel François Canrobert, commanding the 64th Regiment of the Line at Ténès, to act against one of the region’s defiant insurgent tribes. Canrobert’s unit took position on the plateau of Tadjena, north of Orléansville, at an outlook overseeing the Dahra region. The French had received intelligence from a local spy on the whereabouts of an inciting tribal leader, who was supposed to be in a meeting with local chieftains. On 26 January, Canrobert received the reconnaissance report he awaited so impatiently and mobilized 500 elite grenadiers, the cavalry, and the *goum*, irregular Arab horsemen. They marched through the night towards their target. At dawn, with the first gleam of light at the horizon, the soldiers were able to make out the tents in the valley, tucked into the mountains. The cavalry and the *goum* split and blocked the valley’s exit, the only passage available to the population to be chased out by the infantry. Soon the first *douars* – villagers – cried alarm, bullets were exchanged, the entire valley was gripped by panic: ‘women, men, children scurry to the only exit offered to them by the terrain, only to find the riflemen and the *goum*; salvoes whizz and the riflemen’s sabers pierce many, and one hundred fifty corpses soon scattered the ground’, reported one soldier who participated in the raid.²² Canrobert’s unit seized prisoners, mostly women with their children, as well as cattle and crops, a quite typical scenario. Such *razzias* with their indiscriminate slaughter not only produced the desired terror, usually the *razzias* also yielded a rich booty in livestock and produce, a welcome alternation to military rations. Lieutenant Colonel de Montagnac, an officer known for his fierceness and later killed by Algerian fighters, had applauded the new tactic: ‘It solved’, he wrote, ‘the huge problem ... to feed our

²¹The practice of the *razzia* is the historic precursor to the Prophet Mohammad’s jihad, see William Montgomery Watt, ‘Islamic Conceptions of the Holy War’, in Thomas Patrick Murphy (ed.), *The Holy War* (Columbus: Ohio State UP 1976), 141–56.

²²Louis Charles Pierre de Castellane, *Souvenirs de la vie militaire en Afrique* (Paris: Victor Lecou 1852), 146–9.

soldiers in Africa without the need for those immense supply convoys.²³

Yet the razzias were more than just ‘organized theft,’ as some critics in Paris called the practice. Officers saw it as a necessary adaptation of tactics to the local circumstances. In 1840, only eight years after Clausewitz’s *On War* had been published, the Prussian Major General Carl von Decker traveled to Africa to observe the ongoing French campaign against Abd-el-Kader’s insurrection. ‘Hopefully you left all your European ideas over there in Toulon’, a French officer greeted the Prussian as he debarked from his vessel in Algiers. Decker, at first dazzled by this remark, only understood after several months how right the French officer had been.²⁴ The essential elements of European warfare were missing in Algeria: there were no enemy positions that could be attacked, no fortifications, no operationally relevant locations, no strategic deployments, no classical lines of communication, no adversarial army, no decisive battles – there was even ‘no center of gravity’, Decker noted in a direct reference to Clausewitz: ‘The finest gimmicks of our newest theoreticians of war lose their magic power [in Africa].’²⁵ One feature that particularly bedazzled European military thinkers was that territory could not be held. If a soldier ‘can’t even remain on the square-inch of land which he fought for with his own blood, then indeed the most sublime “Theory of Great War” will be obsolete and one has ... to come up with a new one’, Decker noted.²⁶ The razzia was just that: a first cut at a new method of war. Bugeaud had elevated the razzia to a doctrine.

But the political class in Paris took issue with the costly and drawn-out campaign in Algeria. Bugeaud, a highly successful agrarian reformer and innovator in his civilian life in Perigord, had been elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1831 as representative of the Dordogne. The same year he was promoted *maréchal de camp*, a rank equivalent to that of a brigadier general. Bugeaud maintained his seat in the chamber throughout his military career, and by the late 1830s was campaigning in Paris to be the next governor-general of Algeria. In a speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 15 January 1840, he forcefully argued the case for the razzia in response to political criticisms. ‘These murmurs seem to mean that the Chamber finds these means too

²³An excellent history of the *Armée d’Afrique* is in Charles-André Julien, *Histoire de l’Algérie contemporaine*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1964), 316.

²⁴Decker recounts this anecdote in the introduction to his book, Carl von Decker, *Algerien und die dortige Kriegsführung* (Berlin: Friedrich August Herbig 1844), 160–2.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 162.

²⁶*Ibid.*

barbaric', he began, referring to widespread unease in Paris about the harsh tactics:

Gentlemen, you don't make war with philanthropic sentiments. If you want the end, you have to want the means. If there are no other means than those indicated, they have to be used. I would always prefer French interests to an absurd philanthropy for foreigners who behead our wounded soldiers and prisoners of war.²⁷

In 1840 France had approximately 60,000 troops in Algeria, and Emir Abd-el-Kader's insurrection was consolidating. All of Algeria's previous commanding generals, about ten in short succession, had tried various strategies and methods, with a very modest track record of success.

In a speech to deputies in Paris on 14 May 1840, Bugeaud sketched out an emerging doctrine of counterinsurgency warfare that would take shape over the next years: 'In Europe, Gentlemen, we don't just make war against armies; we make war against interests.' Yet the European way of war, focused on the adversary's armies and centers of industry, would not work in a country where these objectives, or interests, were absent, Bugeaud reasoned:

There are no equivalent interests to seize in Africa, or at least there's only one, the agricultural interest. And even that interest is much more difficult to seize in Africa than elsewhere, because there are neither villages nor farms. But nevertheless one sows grains, brings in the harvest, and there are pastures. . . . I couldn't discover any other sizable interest.²⁸

Good generals would be able to do great things with small armies in Europe, Bugeaud continued. 'That's wrong in Africa, where you rarely find twelve or fifteen thousand Arabs united.' In Europe one or two operations could suffice to subdue a kingdom, where a well-trained and well-equipped small army of 60,000 men could win two battles against an army twice as large. But in Africa 'the force is diffuse, it's everywhere'. In such an environment, a regular European army found itself in the position of a bull attacked by a multitude of wasps, Bugeaud reasoned. Interests would be just as difficult to seize as the skilled Arab horsemen that impressed French soldiers so profoundly.

²⁷Speech, 15 Jan. 1840, Thomas Robert Bugeaud, and Paul Azan, *Par l'épée et par la charrue: écrits et discours* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France 1948), 67–8.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 66.

The only possible consequence was to emulate the adversary. 'Only by diffusing oneself, if this expression may be allowed, can one deal with them.'²⁹

The *razzia* was the operational tool to put these ideas into action. 'In Europe, once [you are] master of two or three large centers of industry and production, the entire country is yours', wrote Pierre de Castellane, one Bugeaud's subordinates who participated in several *razzias*. 'But in Africa, how can you impose your will on a population whose only link with the land is the pegs of their tents?'³⁰ For men at arms who thought along purely military lines, the alternative was clear. 'There's only one means, the *razzia*, a *coup de main*, which hurls a force upon a population with the rapidity of a bird of prey, stripping it of its riches, its herds, its grains – the Arab's only vulnerability.'³¹ Military operations became centered on the population out of necessity, because proper targets were not available. 'One has no other means that to take the grain which feeds them, the flocks which clothe them. Therefore the war on silos, the war on cattle, *la razzia*.'³²

Another European military visitor, Waldemar von Raaslöff, after noting one *razzia*'s material gains, pointed out the immense 'moral effect of a well-executed *razzia*', the news of which would travel 'quickly across the entire country. After observing the French operations for one and a half years, the Danish officer, like Decker, was certain to witness 'the transition to a new way of war, driven unmistakably by General Bugeaud's *razzia*'.³³ Yet the *razzia* was only one dimension of that new way of war. Its flipside was more innovative and less ferocious: the *bureau arabe*.

The 'Bureaux arabes'

'In general, in all countries: the day after the conquest is more difficult than the day [of conquest] itself: it's not battle any more, but it's not yet peace; the people one faces are not enemies any more, but they are not yet fellow citizens.' So wrote, in 1858, a young intellectual and future politician in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, a widely read and respected

²⁹'Ce n'est qu'en se diffusant soi-même, s'il est permis de s'exprimer ainsi, qu'en peut les attendre.' Ibid., 125.

³⁰Castellane, *Souvenirs*, 229.

³¹Ibid., 338.

³²Ibid., 229.

³³Raaslöff later became the Danish minister to the United States during the Civil War, and later Minister of War of Denmark. Waldemar Rudolph von Raaslöff, *Rückblick auf die militairischen und politischen Verhältnisse der Algérie in den Jahren 1840 und 1841* (Altona: J. Fr. Hammerich 1845), 398 footnote.

Parisian journal.³⁴ Albert de Broglie had explored Algeria for a year. A young liberal spirit – ‘even a little too liberal’ in the view of some officers who met him – Broglie later went on to become French ambassador to London, minister of foreign affairs, and twice prime minister of France in the 1870s. The traveler’s analysis of the French attempt to restore order in Algeria after several successfully crushed insurgencies was astute: ‘The absolute rule of war, that of the use of force, ended; yet the empire of the law cannot quite begin.’ When the 36-year-old duke visited to the new colony, more than half of the 28 years of French occupation were marked by a blood-soaked attempt to crush various tribal insurgencies and prevent the renewed outbreak of ‘la guerre sainte’, of holy war, a dreadful prospect that sent shivers down the spines of French officers. Real calm and stability proved elusive, and as a consequence of this volatile state of affairs it was risky and difficult to substitute the military regime with a civilian administration. In such a volatile situation, a civil regime ‘inspires less respect than the military one, but without evoking less repugnance’.³⁵ A military interface to deal with the civilian population was needed.

The *bureaux arabes* were the answer. ‘The institution,’ wrote a former head of one of the bureaus, Ferdinand Hugonnet, in 1858, was ‘not comparable with anything of the past’.³⁶ Their setup would devolve and evolve notably between the 1830s and the late 1860s, and eventually give rise to the specialization of indigenous affairs officers, successfully employed in Morocco in the 1920s and 1930s and later in Algeria in the form of the so-called *Sections administratives spécialisées*, or SAS. The *bureaux arabes* were created under General Avizard’s leadership, his only significant contribution, between 4 March and 19 April 1833.³⁷ Before their professionalization, indigenous affairs had been a rather improvised job of interpreters, often local Jews and other polyglots. The head of such a *bureau arabe* had to know Arab affairs in his area of responsibility, inform the governor, and transmit orders. Although the institution initially was a great success, the organization was temporarily abolished in November 1834, and several attempts were made to reorganize Arab affairs. But no satisfactory solution was found.

Bugeaud then reinstated the institution. On 16 August 1841, eight months after he took command, he reorganized the Arab affairs

³⁴Albert de Broglie, ‘Une réforme administrative en Afrique, II’, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 25/1 (1860), 295–335, 298. The article was later expanded into a book.

³⁵Ibid., 298.

³⁶Ferdinand Hugonnet, *Souvenirs d’un chef de bureau arabe* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères 1858), 5.

³⁷Decker, *Algerien und die dortige Kriegsführung*, 184.

branch. The *Directeur des affaires arabes*, Eugène Daumas, was now equipped with full authority vis-à-vis the *ka'ids*, *sheiks*, *hakems*, *cadis*, *muphtis*, and all other indigenous authorities. He was tasked to establish relations with tribes both under French authority and independent, to 'explain French policy and operations,' but also to transmit information to the various intelligence services upon request.³⁸

After the conquest of Algeria's east in 1842, the country was subdivided into three provinces, Oran, Algiers and Constantine. Each province had three types of territories, *civil*, *mixte*, and *arabe*. In 1848, when Algeria was declared French territory in the same way as metropolitan France, the mixed territories were abolished, and the three provinces were structured into *départements* – civil territories – on the one hand and military territories on the other hand. Each *département* was, like in France, administered by a prefect and subdivided into *arrondissements* that were administered by sub-prefects and mayors. Prefects in Algeria corresponded directly with the minister of war in matters related to their department's general administration and in all other matters with the respective other ministries.³⁹ The military territories, however, remained under the local responsibility of Algeria's *gouverneur général*. The man in this powerful position corresponded directly with the minister of war, the head of state, or the emperor; he had under his command Algeria's land and naval forces. The territories were administered through the division commanders as intermediaries. Military sectors were administered by subdivision commanders. These officers, usually of the rank of lieutenant colonel or colonel, had under their command, among others, the Arab affairs officers, who led the *bureaux arabes*, as well as indigenous agents of various rank. The officers that staffed the bureaus were from various arms, but mostly infantry. They never constituted a regular corps but were detached from their regiments. It is difficult to say how the Arab affairs posting affected these officers' careers. But 16 officers went on to become generals, among them Louis de la Moricière and Daumas.

To run a *bureau arabe* effectively, its staff needed a rather unmilitary skill-set. In 1845 there were an estimated two million inhabitants of Algeria, a number that historians of Algeria believe grew by 300,000 over the next ten years. Although the war demanded a heavy toll, it probably did not offset the natural population growth. Algeria at the time, it should be noted, was more sparsely populated than today. The Ottomans had not treated Algeria as a priority and the country's social structures deeply rooted in ancient tribal traditions of its various ethnic groups. The bureaus were equally staffed sparsely, particularly when

³⁸Arrête du gouverneur général, 16 Aug. 1841, reproduced in *ibid.*, 24.

³⁹For a more detailed administrative history, see *ibid.*, Chapter 1.

compared to the vast areas of land nominally under their responsibility. The *bureau arabe* of the subdivision in Orléansville, a particularly important one given the region's chronic unrest, is a good example. In 1852 consisted of a squadron leader at its head; one or two assisting junior officers of the infantry; an indigenous NCO of the *spahis*, a locally recruited mounted security force; a medical officer; an interpreter; a *cadi* (Muslim judge); a *khodja* (secretary); two clerks; and a *chaouch* (usher). This core staff of 11 had additional small indigenous troops of about 25 *spahis* and 8 *mekhazenis*. The two cultures consequently had to cooperate and forge a working relationship, an intention Bugeaud had from the beginning.

The total numbers of the bureaus and their staff are difficult to determine precisely over the institution's lifespan. In December 1866 the official lists name 206 officers serving as administrators, the vast majority of them in the field, two dozen had management duties with the *bureau politique* in Algiers. Almost three quarters of these officers were from the infantry, less than one quarter from the cavalry, and only a handful from the artillery and staffs. Only 13 per cent came from noble family backgrounds.⁴⁰

The French Army's organization of the *bureaux arabes* tried to emulate the local society's tribal structures. This became particularly apparent when Bugeaud's reinvigorated campaign crushed Abd-el-Kader's main force in 1843. Many tribes formerly under the Emir's protection then fell under French rule. To administer them, naturally, it was necessary to procure intelligence not only on the country's physical topography, but also its social and political constitution. Bugeaud believed that the new government system should not paternalistically impose a new system, but that it had to reflect established forms of authority, traditions and costumes. The same fierce general who elevated the brutal *razzia* to a systematic method to deal with adversarial tribes also understood that a more civil and cooperative method was required to deal with cooperative tribes and populations. Bugeaud explained:

Good policy demands that for secondary jobs, we should have Arabs administering Arabs, with the French provincial and subdivision commanders in a supervising role. Yet, at present, this is even a necessity, because the numbers of officers who know the language, the costumes, and Arab affairs in general will for a

⁴⁰Vincent Monteil, 'Les Bureaux arabes au Maghreb (1833–1961)', *Esprit* 29/300 (1961), 577; Xavier Yacono, *Les bureaux arabes et l'évolution des genres de vie indigènes dans l'ouest du Tell algérois (Dahra, Chéelif, Ouarsenis, Sersou)* (Paris: Larose 1953), 116.

long time be too small for us to even contemplate in principle giving the Arabs French *aghas* [chief officers] and *kaid*s.⁴¹

The commander concluded that the French had to use the men that were in place, the tribal leaders who have influence, be it by birth, by courage, by their aptitude at war or at governing. The French also realized that the power of influential families and tribes should not be underestimated, 'it is much better to have them on our side than against us', Bugeaud wrote. Particularly in a Muslim society, the potential for ferocity and pretentiousness was large, he reasoned, and there was a high risk that the population would be pushed towards the 'fanatics of religion and nationality'. Cooption and cooperation was an elegant way to deal with this risk. 'The best way to check and to minimize [the tribal leaders'] influence is to make them serve our purposes.' The general therefore advised care: the choice of Arab administrators was not only an eminently political task. Once in place they would have to be supervised and educated in order to modify their behavior gradually. Yet at the same time it was imperative to get them to 'respect those that they administer'.⁴² Arab affairs officers consequently were supposed to study the languages of the region, local costumes, complicated laws, serve by the side of a superior officer, be his translator and his personal assistant, sometimes even on their own. All this was to be done in small forts constructed in haste, with a battalion but more likely with just a company or a platoon, in order to hold important positions.

A ministerial order on 1 February 1844, authorizing what in fact was already in place, spelled out the organization for the *bureaux arabes*. It created a Directorate of Arab Affairs in each military division in Algeria, under the commanding general's direct authority. The ministry foresaw *bureaux arabes* of two classes, bureaus of the first class were established and staffed at subdivision headquarters; those of the second class were based at secondary locations but remained under the authority of district's division command. The officers were charged with a variety of tasks that required a high level of skill. By 1858 there were 11 provincial bureaus of the first class, 21 bureaus of the second class, and 13 'annexes', or bureaus of the third class. The bureaus were under military authority on all levels and still run centrally from Algiers, by a *bureau politique* with directorates on a division level at Blida, Oran, and Constantine. The setup would only be changed when Marshal Patrice MacMahon became governor-general in March 1864.

⁴¹Bugeaud, quoted in Albert Ringel, *Les bureaux arabes de Bugeaud et les cercles militaires de Galliéni* (Paris: E. Larose 1903), 27–8.

⁴²Bugeaud, quoted in *ibid.*, 28.

Yet the uses of the Arab bureaus were not only political or administrative. At least in the campaign's more turbulent phases before 1847, they had an important military function, too. Because the bureaus were well embedded in local judicial procedures, officers saw them as highly efficient and 'natural' instruments of intelligence collection that contributed to the army's success. The staff was tasked to do 'surveillance of the markets' and submit reports to the general government 'on the country's general political and administrative situation.'⁴³ Wherever the young officers were sent, they accepted ungrateful tasks: they supervised the tribes in detail, inquired about their needs and intentions, their desires and fears, heard reclamations, facilitated the work of other administrative bodies, enforced a regular payment of contributions and taxes. The surveillance of mosques and religious confraternities was added to the workload, as commanders constantly feared the specter of a holy war ever since Abd-el-Kader proclaimed *jihad* against the French occupiers in 1832 and Bou Maza spread the 'fever of insurrection' from 1845, as Bugeaud said, through religious incitement. To meet these tough demands, the officers in charge of the bureaus:

must understand and speak the idiom of the indigenous people and they have to acquire a profound knowledge of the country through the study of established costumes, the laws in force, etc. ... The active and intelligent surveillance of indigenous leaders is a delicate task, reserved for the officer in charge of Arab affairs. To make it a success, he should not hesitate by any means to put himself often among the populations: visit the markets, the tribes, and listen to the locals' complaints.⁴⁴

The Arab affairs officials were supposed to remain neutral, not associate themselves with any violence, and make the French authority appear as a protector of the oppressed. This image – although in sharp contrast to the *razzia* – should be projected into the most remote *douar* (village).⁴⁵

In 1870 there were about 50 *bureaux arabes* in Algeria, with an Arab secretary and a doctor. After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 and the fall of the Second Empire the bureaus were progressively rolled

⁴³Arrêté ministériel, 1 Feb. 1844, *Bulletins officiels*, t.III, 21–2, reproduced in Jacques Frémeaux, *Les Bureaux arab dans l'Algérie de la conquête* (Paris: Denoël 1993), 288; see also Broglie, 'Une réforme administrative en Afrique, II', 300.

⁴⁴H. Ideville, *Le Maréchal Bugeaud, d'après sa correspondance intime et des documents inédites 1784–1849*, 3 vols., Vol. III (Paris 1882), 137–8.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

back.⁴⁶ When Bugeaud left Algeria, briefly before his long-time adversary Abd-el-Kader surrendered to La Moricière, the French had 108,000 men in Algeria under arms – in a country that had a population of approximately 2.5 million inhabitants at that time.⁴⁷ The *bureaux arabes* are widely credited as an important element that helped the French – initially – succeed in Algeria. Yet an institution as innovative and revolutionary and the *bureaux arabes* were bound to get disapproving appraisals as well. ‘There is today’, Broglie wrote in 1860, ‘probably no institution more vigorously attacked and more lightly defended.’⁴⁸ There were principally two lines of criticism: that they were not efficient enough, that they were too efficient – and later that the Army should mind its business and better be good at fighting real wars.

First, there is the point that the *bureaux arabes* just did not live up to the job. Algeria was a country virtually unknown to Englishmen, wrote Lewis Wingfield in 1868. The prolific and well-connected London writer, artist and actor set out to provide a ‘simple narrative’ about the budding colony so far untouched by the British commercial enterprise, ‘well supported by statistics’ and ‘well stocked with reliable information’.⁴⁹ So he did. Wingfield found two nations in Algeria, Arabs and Kabyles, ‘with neither blood nor feelings in common’. The arrival of European settlers complicated the situation even further, he analyzed with clarity. The government of Algeria, Wingfield observed, was ‘so complex as almost to defy the sagacity of the most enlightened diplomatists’.⁵⁰ Military government, in his view, was just not competent enough. The Army governed nine-tenths of Algeria by ‘little bands of officers sprinkled in threes and fours across the country’.⁵¹ Wingfield had a sharp eye for the administrators’ own administrative faults: the habitual absence of the superior commander, a consequence of the bureaux’ geographic setup, devolved the settling of all these questions on junior officers. Captains and lieutenants ran a system of justice in a country with a population of nearly three million, ‘without knowing the laws’. Both superior officers and junior commanders

⁴⁶Paul Bourdre, *A travers l’Algérie: Souvenirs de l’excursion parlementaire septembre-octobre 1879* (Paris: G Charpentier 1880), 301.

⁴⁷Julien, *Histoire de l’Algérie contemporaine*, 270.

⁴⁸Broglie, ‘Une réforme administrative en Afrique, II’, 300.

⁴⁹Lewis Wingfield, *Under the Palms in Algeria and Tunis*, Vol.1 (London: Hurst & Blackett 1868), viii.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p.97.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

‘go back whence they came just as they are beginning to learn a little experience!’⁵²

When we realise to ourselves that these labours of Hercules are in the hands of captains and sub-lieutenants, who leave their regiments only for a short time, and in whose career diplomacy forms no part, we can imagine the manner in which the work is done.⁵³

Yet the *bureaux arabes* were the principal bodies of state authority in the new Algerian colony. They ‘unite under their administration all the functions which in the mother-country devolve on the maturest heads of state’, Wingfield wrote, referring to the sophisticated ministerial departments that governed metropolitan France.

But, in France, an inverse line of criticism was made: that the institution had become too sophisticated. A parliamentary report written up by Paul Bourdre, the secretary general of the Orient Society in Paris and an ardent supporter of the settlers. ‘The *bureaux arabes*’, Bourdre wrote, ‘have assumed an absolute authority over the indigenous ... they became the Arabs’ sultans.’⁵⁴ The author, in line with Algeria’s vocal lobby of European settlers, condemned the bureaux’ ‘royal’ powers in the military territories. Jules Duval, a scholar and historian, highlighted the severe and continued trend of a ‘silent emancipation’ of the bureaux which aligned them ‘by heart, spirit, and language’ with the Arab population, to the dismay of European settlers.⁵⁵ Algeria’s discontented Europeans were highly sensitive to any undue support of the natives by the French government and frequently pressed the exaggerated charge that the *bureaux arabes* were ‘more Arab than the Arabs’.⁵⁶ The Army’s sole business remained, in their view, ‘to uphold the rights of the aborigines, at the expense of those who have abandoned home and country to improve the wastes of Africa’.⁵⁷ The concerns even went further than that. Over time, the settlers feared, close links would be established between the French Army’s leaders and Arab leaders. Both shared an interest in an

⁵²Ibid., 100.

⁵³Ibid., 99.

⁵⁴Bourdre, *A travers l’Algérie*, 298.

⁵⁵Jules Duval, *L’Algérie et les colonies françaises* (Paris: Guillaumin 1877), 108.

⁵⁶Wingfield, *Under the Palms in Algeria and Tunis*, 167. Indeed Bugeaud himself had argued that his methods – this time with respect to the razzia – were more Arab than the Arabs: his point although was that the increased mobility of his flying columns rivaled the mobility of nomadic tribes.

⁵⁷Ibid., p.95.

‘abnormal’ regime that would run counter to colonial interests. Without acting together, the traveler reported, ‘it happens, by force of circumstance, that they mutually support each other’.⁵⁸

A Test-Run

Great battles often emanate the glorious names of the great generals who fought them. In long irregular wars and colonial quests, sometimes an entire phase of a country’s history is associated with the name of a famous general or marshal who shaped it. The name of General Joseph-Simon Galliéni will rest associated with the destiny of Madagascar like that of Marshal Bugeaud with Algeria, wrote Albert Decrais in a major study of the island’s history in 1905.⁵⁹ The former French minister of colonies was not exactly right: over time Bugeaud’s glory wilted as his name became as controversial as his tactics in Algeria. Yet Galliéni’s name kept its gloss. Stephen Henry Roberts, a pioneer of colonial studies and at times and outspoken critic of French policy, found that ‘Gallieni, perhaps, the greatest figure in French colonial policy, really made Madagascar’.⁶⁰ More recently Joseph Raseta, himself a Malagasy rebel leader and nationalist member of parliament, called Galliéni ‘a positive, constructive person’.⁶¹

The officer who came to Madagascar from Tonkin (North Vietnam) with fresh stars pinned to his shoulders indeed merits a closer look. Galliéni was a less eccentric and less forceful military leader than Bugeaud. Perhaps it is the lack of flamboyance that make him one of history’s most overlooked pioneers of counterinsurgency doctrine; perhaps it is the lack of excessive violence and large numbers of casualties that kept him out of the limelight; perhaps it is the obscurity of the island-country his name is most associated with, Madagascar.

Before analyzing the counterinsurgency tactics employed on the island, the political and geographical context has to be sketched out briefly. The French Third Republic government of Jules Ferry fell on 10 March 1885 over the Tonkin affair, and the anti-colonial mood in Paris grew stronger. Yet Paris was determined to secure strategic key points

⁵⁸J.J. Clamageran, *L’Algérie: impressions de voyage* (17 mars– 4 juin 1873) (Paris: Germer Baillière 1874), 127.

⁵⁹Decrais in preface to André You, *Madagascar: Histoire, Organisation, Colonisation* (Paris: Berger-Levrault 1905), viii.

⁶⁰Stephen H. Roberts, *The History of French Colonial Policy (1870–1925)* (London: P.S. King 1929), 390.

⁶¹Raseta, quoted in Hubert Deschamps, ‘Madagascar and France, 1870–1905’, in Desmond J. Clark, Roland Anthony Oliver, J.D. Fage and A.D. Roberts (eds), *The Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 6 (Cambridge UP 1975), 538.

in the Indian Ocean. Later that year, on 17 December, a treaty between the French and Malagasy governments was signed. It gave a French 'resident' the right to represent Madagascar in all its external relations and, within a limited perimeter, to occupy Diego Suarez Bay, a strategic position at the island's northern tip.⁶² Although neither Rainilaiarivony, the Malagasy prime minister, nor the French negotiators had called the island a 'protectorate' *de jure*, the French intentions were to impose one *de facto*. In 1890 Britain's Lord Salisbury, who derided the frequent French military conquests as irrational, hysterical, and absurd,⁶³ recognized Madagascar as a French protectorate in exchange for the French recognition of Zanzibar as a British protectorate.

The entire island of Madagascar, with an area larger than France or about twice the size of Arizona, had a small population of about 2.5 million. The island's sparsely populated interior is dominated by the central highlands, a plateau marked by terraced, rice-growing valleys carved between barren hills, about 1,000 meters above sea level. Steep cliffs make the Red Island's interior a vast natural fortress. The island's narrow coastal plains were home to the country's two greatest defenders: General Hazo and General Tazo, a Hova King once boasted – the thick rainforest and tropical fever.

The Malagasy society was highly stratified: the largest ethnic group, with about one million people, were the Hovas, who mostly lived in Imerina (or Merina), the large 25,000 square-kilometer province in the central highlands. They traditionally formed the ruling class. Yet in some areas the government's authority was minimal or non-existent; Sakalava tribes in the West had maintained almost complete independence. Imerina's capital of Tananarive had 750,000 inhabitants, stony pathways as roads, and mostly wooden huts as houses.

The island's economy was largely agricultural. Peasants produced rice, cassava, sweet potato, poultry and cattle; industrial progress was modest, with the main sectors being construction, weaving, the plaiting of mats, ironwork. Some new technologies like brick-making and tinsmithing were introduced by Europeans. The island's exports were gold, live cattle, wild rubber and wax. Cloth was the first import good from Europe and America, Madagascar also had to import rice to feed its population. Due to a lack of modern ports, the goods were offloaded on the beaches.

By 1894, Madagascar's status was still in dispute internationally. With the European partition of Africa in full swing, proponents of colonial expansion in France agreed that Madagascar's ambiguous

⁶²Ibid., 525.

⁶³Henri Brunschwig, *French Colonialism, 1871–1914: Myths and Realities* (London: Pall Mall 1966), ix.

status could no longer be tolerated. Le Myre de Vilers, a French emissary, traveled to Tananarive in October to hand an agreement to the prime minister and Queen Ranaivalona II – the two were married – to station French troops on the island. When Rainilaiarivony refused, the French National Assembly authorized war. France was about to annex ‘la Grande Île’, the world’s fourth largest, in an energetic campaign.

The regular campaign went reasonably well. In December 1894 and January 1895 an occupying force of 18,000 troops commanded by General Jacques Duchesne landed on opposite sides of the island at Tamatave and Majunga, from where it set out on an expedition to Tananarive, the Hova kingdom’s capital. The Merina rulers were over-confident of the natural obstacles any intruder would encounter, and therefore under-prepared. The initial campaign included the construction of a street through marshy terrain in the middle of the rainy season. After these initial problems, although considerable, France was able to bring its modern firepower to bear against the partly British-trained enemy force. The 30,000-strong Merina Army suffered heavy losses and after resistance at Tsarasoatra on 29 June and Andriba on 22 August, General Rainianjalahy made his last efforts. On 30 September 1895 Tananarive was surrounded and the Queen, after artillery barrages were fired on her palace, surrendered and accepted the French protectorate in a peace treaty, which was signed the next day. France in turn accepted the Hova hegemony. After seven months, the French had suffered 4,613 fatalities, the vast majority from tropical diseases; only 25 had died in battle.⁶⁴

The French continuation of the Hova regime in turn helped spark an insurrection. The government could not prevent the seeds of a revolt from germinating in Madagascar’s lush mountainous rainforests. When the insurrection grew stronger, attacks on convoys became more widespread, villagers fled, and even French merchants were held by local profiteers who demanded ransom in exchange. In a rather European fashion, perhaps because Duchesne was a metropolitan and not a colonial general, the invading French were too focused on Madagascar’s capital, its regular army, and the ruling government. Duchesne treated the Queen, who was largely powerless, with all the courtesy and honor that would have to be bestowed upon a European royal. But he neglected the peasants and country dwellers. Yet the Malagasy were nationalistic, xenophobic, and to an extent alienated by

⁶⁴For a detailed account of the campaign’s ‘regular’ first phase, see Anthony Clayton, ‘Hazou, Fazou, Tazou: Forest, Fire, and Fever – The French Occupation of Madagascar’, in A. Hamish Ion and E.J. Errington (eds), *Great Powers and Little Wars: The Limits of Power* (New York: Praeger 1993), 93.

a long tradition of European Christian missionaries. But above all, they were frustrated with the Merina court's oppressive rule and their cruel excesses earlier in the century. For a large group it was a great disappointment that the French left the old rulers in power.

Nearly a year after the invasion, on 22 November 1895, a group of 2,000 rebels took Arivonimamo, a town not far from the capital. The *fahavalo*, as the Merina court called the rebels – Malagasy for 'enemy' – killed, among others, the Merina governor, the British missionaries William and Lucy Johnson and their child, and three French travelers. For the first time in years, it became too dangerous to travel for Europeans and even for locals. The excited crowds advanced closer to the capital, and for weeks the bright fires of burning villages, schools and churches in the vicinity of Tananarive, one of Madagascar's richest and most densely populated areas, could be seen from the city at night. In total 750 missions and churches were burned or destroyed, one British missionary reported:

Those who rose were led by fanatical sorcerers and such like, and their object was to drive, not only the French, but all white men of whatsoever nationality out of the country, and restore the old political and religious regime. Their numbers swell rapidly, especially as they forced into their service all the able-bodied men they came across.⁶⁵

The new wave of violence exacerbated the security situation in some areas where brigandry had already been widespread since the early 1890s. Organized rings of insurgents stole cattle, enslaved and sold locals, and disrupted mining works. For a considerable period trade practically ceased.

The pressure to act grew. Yet France's civilian representative in the capital, Hippolyte Laroche, did not have the necessary capabilities to restore security once it had broken down. The inverse applied to the army: 'our officers and soldiers', Galliéni analyzed the situation, 'had no initiative, no way to influence the indigenous population.' The army, in the general's view, had the capabilities but not the mission to prevent the breakdown of order and security; it 'represented a force confined to a waiting position and without order to transform from a political and social point of view the conditions that gave birth to the insurrection'.⁶⁶

In early 1896, the French had left only a reduced force of 200 officers and 2,400 men from France and Algeria, plus an additional 1,800

⁶⁵Thomas Trotter Matthews, *Thirty Years in Madagascar* (London: The Religious Tract Society 1904), 308–9.

⁶⁶Joseph-Simon Galliéni, *Neuf ans a Madagascar* (Paris: Librairie Hachette 1908), 31.

indigenous troops, in Imerina province.⁶⁷ The situation for the units in the central highlands became 'deplorable,' reported the *Journal des Science Militaires*, as the security situation pushed up costs for the transportation of goods from coastal Tamatave to Tananarive.⁶⁸ Rabezavana, a former governor of Antsatrana, and a fellow insurgent leader, Rabozaka, organized a 400-man strong unit of former Hova soldiers who had not been disarmed. In March 1896 they occupied Anjozorobe, only 90 kilometers north of the capital.

First military measures were undertaken against the insurgents: several expeditionary columns with a strength of four or five companies were sent to the countryside to them hunt down. Despite some smaller engagements in the north and in the south, the insurrection gained ground every day. Over May and June the rebels' operations grew bolder; more European missionaries, travelers and employees for public projects were attacked and killed. The insurrection finally encircled Tananarive and assumed the character of a siege; the insurgents cut telegraph lines and attempted to interrupt supply lines. The majority of rice paddies lay bare and the capital's shops were running out of produce. The French occupying forces also believed that the Queen and her ministers clandestinely supported the rebels. It dawned on the French that they faced a general Hova insurrection 'in which, openly or not, the overwhelming majority of the population and their leaders took part'.⁶⁹

In September 1896, just before Galliéni arrived to crush the rebellion, the insurgent movement had perfected its organization had formed seven principal groups.⁷⁰ The French army estimated that the rebels had 10,000 firearms, but large numbers were equipped with hatchets and machetes. The insurgency continued to spread and even 'very seriously' menaced French coastal installations. When French and auxiliary troops acted militarily against the insurgents, the irregulars proved 'extremely mobile', Galliéni observed, and avoided any decisive confrontations. After a column had thus passed through, they reoccupied the terrain and continued their harassments. The situation threatened to get out of hand; serious action was required. The Parliament of the Third Republic had passed the law of annexation on

⁶⁷The rations, perhaps tellingly, fell into three classes: French and European Algerian troops received wine rations and more meat; the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, Hausa troops, and Kabyles received no wine and a less elaborate diet; the Malagasy forces were quite literally at the bottom of the food chain: Frédéric Hellot, 'La Pacification de Madagascar', *Journal des Science Militaires* 75/10 (1899), 8, 40.

⁶⁸Ibid., 8.

⁶⁹Ibid., 13.

⁷⁰See a detailed discussion in *ibid.*

6 August 1896, which declared Madagascar a French colony and instantly abolished slavery – a move that quite ironically threatened to worsen the crisis because both the nobles and brigands were bound to lose revenue. The same day the Ministère des Colonies laid the both military and civil powers into the hands of the superior commander.⁷¹ The 47-year-old *Général de Division* Joseph-Simon Galliéni was granted full civil and military powers upon his arrival at Tananarive on 28 September, and later received the title of governor-general.

Paris did not simply send one of its best naval infantry officers to Madagascar: it sent a proven colonial counterinsurgency method to the island. As a more junior officer, the energetic republican Galliéni had already proved his talents as a counterinsurgent and pacifier in the Soudan (1887–88) – the French Western Sudan, created in 1880 as Upper Senegal and later renamed Soudan, today's Mali, not to be confused with the East African country of Sudan. As resident-general Galliéni successfully dealt with 'pirates' in Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin from 1893 to 1895 – a region that today largely coincides with Vietnam. When he arrived in Madagascar, Galliéni was equipped with a counterinsurgency method he had successfully developed and optimized in those previous postings. And he energetically implemented it.

To understand the general's first actions taken, it is important to first understand the administrative system he swiftly put in place. Galliéni's first principle, 'indispensable in a new country', was the concentration of powers under one direction. In place of a central administration, Galliéni created a military institution, the *territoire militaire*. A secretary general who at the same time was the chief of staff headed the new office. The *territoire militaire* was the 'leading body of political and military action'.⁷² The colonel who commanded a territory had to make sure that single particular actions would not work against the larger interest but instead advanced the common goal. A few months after Galliéni had arrived in Madagascar, he asked his former assistant in Tonkin, the 42-year-old royalist-inclined Lieutenant Colonel Hubert Lyautey, to join him. Lyautey arrived in March 1897. The system the cavalry colonel helped put in place had the veritable hallmarks of a 'general government', he wrote: 'to coordinate military operations and development work toward a common end'.⁷³ The staff was structured in seven offices: 1st personnel, 2nd operations, 3rd civil affairs, 4th topographic service, 5th printing and publications, 6th indigenous affairs, and 7th intelligence. An officer headed all bureaux except

⁷¹Ringel, *Les bureaux arabes de Bugeaud et les cercles militaires de Galliéni*, 108.

⁷²Hubert Lyautey, *Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar: 1894–1899* (Paris: A. Colin 1921), 663.

⁷³Ibid.

indigenous affairs. The 3rd bureau, civil affairs, had an elevated importance and was structured into four sections responsible for a wide portfolio of tasks: political affairs, local budget, judiciary system, militias, public works, and civil construction projects; personnel; commerce and colonization, agriculture, forests, mines, taxes, tariffs, and imports. The indigenous affairs bureau was responsible for education, religion and cults.

That functional division of labor was supplemented by a new regional setup. The *territoire*'s guiding idea was decentralization: to be able to respond to with specific measures to specific problems. Therefore the general's first directive was the creation of seven 'cercles' or districts. The limits of these *cercles* coincided as much as possible with the old borders of the Malagasy districts. Each *cercle* was commanded by a colonel, who had under his orders both troops and civilian personnel, European or indigenous. The commander would, 'if necessary', also work with the old personnel of the Malagasy government. The commander alone was responsible for the results and the progress in his *cercle*, but he was able to decide to a large extent about the means and resources he needed. Imerina province was subdivided into six such 'cercles' – plus the capital – which were designed to reflect the old provincial borders. Not only at the general staff level were officers in charge of military, political and administrative projects; that unity of action applied was even more important for the commanders of the *cercles*. Each commander of a *cercle* could usually draw on the help of two additional French officers, an intelligence officer and a 'officer for the treasury' (*officier chancelier*), plus a staff of civilians and a small security force.

Each *cercle* was again subdivided in several 'secteurs'. At the pacification period's onset this smallest administrative unit was of limited importance. A *secteur* would hold a company-sized unit, or even a platoon. Its leader, a captain or lieutenant chosen carefully by the *cercle*'s commander from his subordinates, was at the same time the leader of the sector. Galliéni specifically ordered his commanders to create these *secteurs* and to unite complete military and civil powers in the hands of these captains and lieutenants. If necessary in order to reflect the local indigenous social setup, there could even be *sous-secteurs*, or subsectors. All the posts, which formed a dense network across the country, worked under guiding principle that military leaders fulfilling political and administrative tasks should exert the largest possible initiative in the villages under their authority: a 'simple and rational' organization that 'unites in the same hands the military command the administrative powers, at all of the hierarchy's echelons'.⁷⁴

⁷⁴Hellot, 'La Pacification de Madagascar', 29.

On 1 October 1896, only three days after his arrival, Galliéni issued comprehensive instructions for his commanders. Their 'first preoccupation,' he ordered, will be to 'bring back the population's calm and its confidence' in their *cercle*'s security situation. The posts, the decree read, 'must be organized defensively, so that the remaining security rearguards are as weak as possible'. He also ordered a show of force in all directions and at all hours to 'give the inhabitants a real idea of our military power and to be able to inspire their confidence in our protection'.⁷⁵ Galliéni also replaced the disliked Merina nobility and used his officers to supervise and empower local chieftains of various ethnic groups. The new approach was spectacularly successful: by the end of 1896 the links between the capital and the ports had been reestablished and secured. The insurgents had been co-opted or driven back to more arid lands outside the central province of Imerina.

'The territory's solid pacification and occupation – advancing slowly from the center to the periphery, according to the method of the oil slick (*par la méthode de la tache d'huile*) – was an accomplished fact in the central region', as Galliéni summed up the successful counter-insurgency strategy after his nine years in Madagascar.⁷⁶ The key to success, he wrote, was the 'combination of political action with military action' in order to simultaneously 'enter into intimate contact with the populations, exploring their tendencies, their mentality, and striving to satisfy their needs in order to attach them through persuasion to the new institutions'.⁷⁷

Yet, although the new administration was designed to be smoothly plugged into the local society's structure and traditions, the system always was planned merely as a temporary measure: success would, little by little, make it obsolete. More than in Algeria 50 years earlier, the Army was keen to limit its administrative commitments to a minimum. The *cercle* in Arivonimamo, with a constituency of more than 300,000 inhabitants, may be cited as an example: by 1898 no regular troops worked there any more and the *cercle*'s commanding officer was only supported by a single adjunct officer. A regular civilian-administered protectorate would eventually replace the military's 'direct administration'.

⁷⁵Instructions, Tananarive, 1 Oct. 1896, *Etat-major, 2e bureau*, reproduced in *ibid.*, 49–50.

⁷⁶Galliéni, *Neuf ans à Madagascar*, 47.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 47. See also Joseph-Simon Galliéni, *Galliéni au Tonkin (1892–1896)* (Paris: Berger-Levrault 1941), 38, 215.

Doctrinal Lessons

The military operations from Algeria to Madagascar sparked a productive debate on countering insurgencies and pacifying colonial conflicts conducted in political magazines, military journals, books, travel reports, in the press, and even in parliament. Staff colleges and military academies debated and captured lessons.⁷⁸ To conceptualize the emerging role of the population, French officers used various metaphors that still dominate the counterinsurgency debate today. One was territory: magnificent public works had been accomplished, one of Bugeaud's best officers reasoned, and the physical terrain and its material topography had been remodeled successfully. But the population's 'moral topography' remained unchanged. The reason, Charles Richard wrote, was simple: 'If one sets out to conquer a country, in the word's true sense, there are two sorts of conquests one has to accomplish: that of the land is the material conquest, and that of the people is the moral conquest.'⁷⁹ The first is executed by the force of arms, sometimes it only takes the time of four or five large battles; the second is executed by ideas, and it can take centuries, he wrote, particularly 'if the conquering people is Christian and the conquered people is Muslim.'

In Sudan, Tonkin, and in Madagascar, this line of thinking was developed further. Galliéni, and then his disciple Lyautey, developed the oil-slick/stain method and regarded the population as the central battleground that needed not only to be secured and protected from insurgent violence – but persuaded that working with the French was better for them than letting the rebels take over government. The new thinking rested on a distinction in slow and fast action. 'The pirate' – the expression was commonly used at the time for irregular land fighters – 'is a plant that grows only in certain terrains', Lyautey wrote many years before Mao used a similar and much quoted metaphor, that of the insurgent swimming like fish in the water. The soil stands for the

⁷⁸The *Ecole supérieure de guerre* in Paris, for instance, produced a 1905 doctrinal manual, *Observations on War in the Colonies*. The text heavily relied on Galliéni and for example outlined his oil-spot method and highlighted the duality of Lyautey's 'material' and 'moral conquest', what today would be called the hearts-and-minds. Albert Ditte, *Observations sur la guerre dans les colonies* (Paris: H. Charles-Lavauzelle 1905), 300 and 313 respectively.

⁷⁹Charles Richard was one of the first commanders of a so-called *bureaux arabe*. 'Quand on veut conquérir, dans le vrai sens du mot, un pays, il y a deux espèces de conquêtes à exécuter: celle du terrain que est la conquête matérielle, et celle du peuple qui est la conquête morale.' Charles Richard, *Etude sur l'insurrection du Dahra* (Algiers: A. Besancenez 1846), 7.

population, which the insurgents need as victims and supporters. 'And the surest method is to render that terrain refractory', Lyautey advised.⁸⁰ Attacking an insurgency's foundation, or its soil, meant to 'turn the population into our foremost helper,' he wrote elsewhere.⁸¹ Instead of operating against the enemy's resources, markets were created and trade encouraged; instead of cutting communications, streets, rails and telegraph lines were built; instead of burning villages, settlements were protected and fortified; instead of killing the population, neutrals were trained and armed. In a reference to earlier tactics applied in Algeria, Lyautey wrote that this method would be 'Bugeaud at his best.'⁸² The objective was to grow and extend the secured and economically active zones from the center to the periphery, like oil spreads out on water.

Conventional operations, the classic use of raw military force in columns and by the cavalry, by contrast, were considered 'absolutely exceptional'.⁸³ These colonial theories, needless to say, did not go down well with many fellow officers in metropolitan France in a time when Europe was enthusiastically approaching the apex of industrial war. When Lyautey came to visit the Colonial Exhibition in Marseilles in 1922, the reception committee discussed how to best welcome him. 'If you want to give him something he is not used to, fire cannon', said a general of another school.⁸⁴ Lyautey was well aware of these hostilities and enduring prejudices. Already in January 1900 he had published an influential article in the renowned *Revue des deux mondes*, titled 'Du rôle colonial de l'armée'. In it Lyautey took up the 'great objection', the cliché of demilitarization put forward against officers as well as the enlisted soldiers in the colonies.⁸⁵ He disclosed himself to be 'very sceptical' of officers who come to the colonies to replay the Battle of Austerlitz – they would not be prepared for the ungrateful, obscure, and patient everyday tasks, the colonial soldier wrote. Instead he deemed it essential that the Colonial Army kept its autonomy and that it did not risk to be absorbed and incorporated into that large organization from which it had been detached. Successful military occupation depended

⁸⁰Hubert Lyautey, *Du rôle colonial de l'armée* (Paris: Armand Colin 1900), 11.

⁸¹Lyautey, *Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar: 1894–1899*, 334.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 112–13.

⁸³Galliéni, *Galliéni au Tonkin (1892–1896)*, 219.

⁸⁴W.L. Middleton, 'Marshal Lyautey: Constructive Colonial Statesman', *The Living Age* 328/4252 (1926), 22, see also Galliéni, *Galliéni au Tonkin (1892–1896)*, 222.

⁸⁵This debate is reminiscent of today's debate about nation-building. Then US foreign-policy adviser, Condoleezza Rice, summed up the skeptics' position most eloquently: 'We don't need to have the 82nd Airborne escorting kids to kindergarten.' 'The Hobbled Hegemon', *The Economist*, 28 July 2007.

not so much on military operations, the future proconsul of Morocco wrote, but on an 'organization on the march'. An organization that was able to fight, win, then administrate and govern, as local conditions required. Lyautey desired, to paraphrase Clausewitz, an organization that was a chameleon, just like war itself.

This method had significant implications for the required set of skills for counterinsurgent forces. Being a professional administrator and savvy local politician required a much broader qualification than being merely a professional soldier. Colonial tasks demanded 'an ensemble of rare qualities' from officers: intelligence, initiative, prudence, responsibility, judgment, calm, perspicacity, local knowledge and a passion for improvement.⁸⁶ Developing these 'virile faculties', Lyautey quipped, would not 'demilitarize' but rather 'de-corporalize' the force, which would be a very different thing (he used a pun in French: *caporal* means corporal; *caporaliser* means to coerce).⁸⁷ Ethnological inquiries had to be undertaken, a society's traditions and its values had to be respected, rivalries and animosities between local groups should be studied and exploited, the trust of the local population should be gained by demonstrating to them the benefits of cooperation with the French. Lyautey, in sharp contrast to Marshal Bugeaud, therefore preferred older and more experienced reservists instead of young and career-minded fighters.

Another problem was the rotation of units in and out of the area of operation. Valuable knowledge and painstakingly established contacts were wasted. To avoid this, Lyautey suggested introducing an administrative vacation for officers, instead of rotating them to random posts after a brief recreational stay in France. His ideal was that colonial officers would be 'homesick in reverse', that they would crave to go back to their administrative sector or circle. This, he maintained, would also have made it worthwhile to learn local languages.

The unity of command was also recognized as a core problem in counterinsurgency operations: the *bureaux arabes*, in Lyautey's view, were constituted by a specialized corps of officers, 'uniquely administrators', distinct from those who commanded the troops. Such a setup, Lyautey argued, did not create the necessary 'unity of action' but maintained two parallel authorities, 'a dualism with all its inconveniences'.⁸⁸ The stark operational and philosophical contrast between the *razzia* on the one hand and the *bureaux arabes* on the other hand highlights this dualism.

⁸⁶Galliéni, *Galliéni au Tonkin (1892-1896)*, p.219.

⁸⁷Lyautey uses a pun: in French 'caporaliser' means to browbeat. Lyautey, *Du rôle colonial de l'armée*, 28.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 7.

The new methods finally had repercussions for civil-military relations. The officers-turned-administrators unified in their hands civil, military and judiciary powers, Galliéni emphasized. They will have 'all liberty' in the choice of means to employ, but also carry full responsibility for the achieved results.⁸⁹ While the industrial model of civil-military relations clearly delineates the civilian and military spheres, the colonial model breaks down the line between soldier and civilian; 'in vain one searches [for] the demarcation' Lyautey said. Those who fought on a daily basis in remote lands against ferocious enemies and the equally relentless elements, those who went through that 'rough school', he maintained full of passion, were 'neither *military* nor *civilian* any more, but simply *colonial*'.⁹⁰

To go full circle one question remains to be answered: was Galula familiar with Lyautey? The answer must be a resounding yes for three reasons: first the grand marshal's methods were spectacularly successful. Although the then 71-year-old 'African' retired during Abd el-Krim's uprising in 1925, Morocco's so-called Riff War, his followers continued to apply his methods; the last resisting tribes submitted in southern Morocco in March 1934. Two of Lyautey's disciples, Generals Antoine Huré (1873–1949) and Georges Catroux (1877–1969) played a key role in pacifying these restive mountainous regions.⁹¹ Both published several much-noted books and articles. Some of these publications almost worshipped Bugeaud and Lyautey.⁹² An official Army instruction issued on 19 February 1932, which Huré praised as the 'road map' to success in a much-quoted article in 1939 (where it was reproduced in its entirety), highlights that all occupied terrain needs to be organized immediately in the rear. 'For the infantry in Morocco, the spade and the pick are as important as the rifle', the instruction stated. Catroux, referring to Huré's roadmap, highlighted the document's intention to 'seize any favorable occasion to advance in an "oil-slick" fashion'.⁹³ But Lyautey's disciples did more than just reiterate ideas – they connected success in Africa with looming war in Europe. Just when Galula prepared for his war college graduation in

⁸⁹Galliéni, *Galliéni au Tonkin (1892–1896)*, 222.

⁹⁰Lyautey, *Du rôle colonial de l'armée*, 7.

⁹¹Jean Gottmann, 'Bugeaud, Galliéni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare', in Edward Mead Earle (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton UP 1943), 252–4.

⁹²'We have nothing to add to what Bugeaud outlined ... and Lyautey realized in his campaign against the Beni-Snassen', Antoine-Jules-Joseph Huré, 'Stratégie et tactique marocaines', *Revue des questions de défense nationale* I/3 (1939), 409.

⁹³Georges Catroux, 'L'achèvement de la pacification marocaine', *Revue politique et parlementaire* 161/479 (1934), 29.

the late 1930s, spreading the 'oil-slick' in Africa was portrayed by France's most noted defense intellectuals as a way to produce and export much-needed colonial battalions against German aggression in Europe.⁹⁴ Galula, a patriot and self-styled man of letters, would not have missed this.

Lyautey, second, died as a symbol of French imperialism, just three months after his continued methods were proven so successful in southern Morocco, in July 1934. *The New York Times* compared him with Hannibal and called him 'Europe's foremost contemporary proconsul and one the greatest proconsuls in history'.⁹⁵ When his remains were 'repatriated' to Morocco in October 1935, the 6th British Destroyer Flotilla and four Spanish destroyers fired salvoes for the *maréchal* and escorted the French ships through the Straits of Gibraltar.⁹⁶ The same year, David Lloyd George, a British prime minister during World War I, praised him as the 'prince of pro-consuls, one of the finest sons ever born to France'.⁹⁷ In 1961, in the very same week in which a group of four French generals attempted a putsch against Charles de Gaulle's government, Lyautey's remains were shipped from Rabat in Morocco to Paris. The great marshal was to be buried next to Emperor Napoleon I in the Hôtel des Invalides.

Finally it is documented that Galula knew and even personally met several of Lyautey's most ardent apostles. At the time when the marshal and his methods were so visibly displayed, Galula graduated from Saint-Cyr, in 1940. Galula described for instance how Catroux, also a Saint-Cyr alumnus, caused an uproar in Algiers when Guy Mollet tried to appoint him as governor-general in February 1956. He briefly met General Charles Noguès (1876–1971), another Lyautey disciple and a former director general of indigenous affairs in Morocco.⁹⁸

Galula, in sum, was heavily influenced by the grand theorists of colonial warfare. The substance of his arguments and even his metaphors unequivocally point this way (although hardly his style). Galula: 'once the selected area is pacified, it will be possible to withdraw from it an important share of our means and to assign them

⁹⁴Georges Catroux, *Lyautey, le marocain* (Paris: Hachette 1952), 25, 31, 98, also Catroux, 'L'achèvement de la pacification marocaine', 27.

⁹⁵'Lyautey Africanus', *New York Times*, 29 July 1934, p.E4.

⁹⁶'Salvo Fired for Lyautey', *New York Times*, 29 Oct. 1935, p.21.

⁹⁷David Lloyd George, quoted in Robin Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule: French Administration of Tribal Areas 1912–1956* (London: Frank Cass 1973), 31.

⁹⁸Galula, *Pacification in Algeria 1956–1958*, 12–13 on Catroux and 179 on Noguès. Specifically on the role of Noguès' indigenous affairs office in the pacification of Morocco, see Catroux, 'L'achèvement de la pacification marocaine', 25.

to neighboring areas, thus spreading an oil slick on the water'.⁹⁹ Galliéni: 'the most fertile method is that of the oil slick, which consists of progressively gaining territory in the front only after organizing and administering it in the rear'.¹⁰⁰ And the general added: yesterday's insurgents will help us against tomorrow's insurgents.

But do yesterday's counterinsurgency methods help to counter tomorrow's insurgencies? The doctrine of population-centricity has come a long way: born in Algeria, tested in Tonkin, developed in Madagascar, regurgitated in Paris, and exported to America, it is now again employed in Muslim lands in Iraq and Afghanistan. But under vastly different political, social, ideological, and technological conditions. So one of Marshal Lyautey's most crucial points must not be ignored. In a letter to Paris written from Tonkin en route to war-torn Madagascar in February 1897 he fulminated with the same fervent passion he yearned for among his subordinates:

But good people, my friends, you don't get it, and you never got it! There is no method, there is no cliché of Galliéni; there are ten, twenty – or, if there is a method, its name is suppleness, elasticity, adaptability to place, time, and circumstances.¹⁰¹

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⁹⁹Galula, *Pacification in Algeria 1956–1958*, 274.

¹⁰⁰Galliéni, *Neuf ans a Madagascar*, 326.

¹⁰¹Lyautey, *Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar: 1894–1899*, 467.

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