

The Campaigns for the Pacification of the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco: A Forgotten Example of Successful Counterinsurgency

**A Monograph
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Abstract

THE CAMPAIGNS FOR THE PACIFICATION OF THE SPANISH PROTECTORATE IN MOROCCO: A FORGOTTEN EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL COUNTERINSURGENCY by MAJOR Víctor Valero García, SPANISH ARMY, 83 pages.

The Campaigns conducted by the Spanish Army from 1909 to 1926 to pacify the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco are almost unknown in the US Army, and the scarce literature written or translated to English provides only a partial vision of them. The ideas that prevail the mainstream scholarship are the severe defeat of Spanish troops at Annual in 1921 and the influence the Protectorate could have had in the political life of the country

This monograph provides a broader vision which, first of all, highlights that the Spanish armed forces not only achieved the pacification of the Protectorate in 1926, but administered it peacefully until 1956 in a remarkable example of Stability Operations. The key to achieve this success was the ability of the Spanish Army to learn how to adapt to the Moroccan scenario culturally, tactically, and technically. Most importantly, during the campaigns of 1921-1926 the Army devised the methods and instruments that would allow for the fruitful administration of the Protectorate until 1956.

To reach this conclusion, the paper provides first the background information that shows the challenges of the task presented to the Army in 1909. The next two sections discuss some of the factors, usually overlooked, that constrained the performance of the Spanish military: the international implications of the Protectorate, the strategic goal to maintain control of the Straits of Gibraltar, and the failure of the Spanish Government to design a coherent and well supported National Strategy regarding the Protectorate. Section four explains the stability operations that the Army performed, within means and capabilities, at the same time that it was providing security and how civilian projects increased as resources became available. Section five studies those areas in which the army improved the most along the campaigns, namely fighting effectiveness, unity of effort, training and coordination, experience and professionalism, equipment and relationships with civilian parties.

The research is based on personal accounts of protagonists and witnesses, original documents available in some of the chronicles or in electronic official archives. Several periodicals available on line have completed the primary sources. Secondary sources are numerous, though usually focused on the 1921 to 1926 time frame or in partial aspects of the campaigns. Nevertheless the sources used provide altogether a complete vision of the whole period. Particular interest has been put in including English written sources and as much as possible from the Moroccan point of view, from where sources are most scarce.

The result of the learning process of the Army was a formula to improve its fighting abilities at the same time that it developed the mechanisms to assure governance of the territory that was being pacified. Keys for the improvement of fighting abilities were the full integration of natives in Spanish units, the creation of professional forces adapted to the characteristics of the theater, and the balance of these professional units with regular armed forces technically and tactically improved. On the governance side, the Spanish Protectorate involved natives as much as possible in local government following a remarkable policy of reconciliation and disturbed as little as possible the traditional Moroccan system or Makhzen by limiting to supervise it closely through the implementation of a network of Oficinas de Intervención or supervision Offices led by an Officer who held all civilian and military responsibilities. The profound cultural awareness of these officers and their initiative allowed them to supervise the administration of the Protectorate by their influence over the tribal leaders.

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Introduction

The performance of the Spanish Armed Forces during the pacification of the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco at the beginning of the 20th Century is one historical episode rather unknown in the US. However, the challenges that the Spanish military had to face can be very relevant for the current development of counterinsurgency doctrine. For several reasons the treatment of the events by the existing literature has provided a distorted image of the real accomplishment of the military in those campaigns. This monograph examines some of the mainstream beliefs to try to discover the real circumstances in which the deeds took place and point out some of the improvements that allowed the Spanish Armed Forces to pacify the protectorate.

Overall the current discourse about this conflict is that Spain, motivated by its recent defeat by the United States in 1898 and pushed by a highly influential military class, opted for the military conquest of one portion of Morocco. After several years of very poor performance, new military commanders on the field engaged in 1921 in an aggressive but ill prepared offensive that culminated in the tremendous defeat of Annual. As a consequence of that rout the opponents to the Spanish presence were able to found a new embryo of a state in the Rif whereas in Spain the increased involvement of the army provoked a military coup. So successful was this new state that it even dared to attack the French Zone. Only the combined military efforts of France and Spain were able to defeat the rebellion.

The thesis of this work is that Spain, compelled by the intervention of other European countries in Morocco, opted for sharing responsibility with France in the establishment of a Protectorate in Morocco as the less expensive way to assure her interests on the vital area of the Straits of Gibraltar. Although in 1912 the government devised a mostly civilian strategy to implement the Protectorate, in reality the only national instrument available to carry out the task was the military. Lack of training and capabilities, poor tactics, political constraints and

international influences resulted in the Annual disaster, which would become the reference to assess the performance of the Army in Morocco for most scholars. However, after a tough learning process and when the government resolutely committed to solve the problem, the armed forces were able to pacify the territory in 1927 and administer it smoothly until 1956.

If history is considered one of the sources of doctrine in all countries and epochs, the influence of history has been particularly important in the development of the current United States Doctrine about counterinsurgency, Field Manual 3-24 “Counterinsurgency.” According to this manual “All insurgencies are different; however, broad historical trends underlie the factors motivating insurgents. Most insurgencies follow a similar course of development”¹. Although the manual has made a great effort to include a wide variety of historical examples, the reality is that they are quite limited—to the point that some authors claim that the manual “is singularly premised on what has become known as the population-centric theory of counterinsurgency.”² Without entering in that discussion, the historical case presented here is significant; first, for being almost novel and second because the legal status of the Protectorate is very similar to the contemporary multinational operations under UN mandate.³ This work is also relevant because it provides historical antecedents about a less familiar geographical area to the present-day US Army: Africa, and in particular the Maghreb. Currently this area is not free of the influence of Islamism extremism and, as the work has developed, African countries in the Mediterranean have come to the front of the international scene.

The paper starts by providing some background information about the situation in Morocco at the beginning of the 20th century, a brief account of how the campaigns developed

¹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: 2006), ix.

² Gian P. Gentile, “The Selective Use of History in the Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine”, *Army History* no 72 (Summer 2009): 21.

³ Gabriel Villalonga Sánchez, “Las lecciones de la Pacificación del Protectorado Español en Marruecos: ¿Están Vigentes?” *Revista Ejército* no 830 (June, 2010): 64.

and the basic data about the environment. The next two sections expand the conventional wisdom about the involvement of Spain in Morocco by introducing first the numerous international implications that influenced the establishment and implementation of the Protectorate and second by explaining how the militarization of the Protectorate was more the result of a failed national strategy than the whim of the armed forces. The two remaining sections deal with the actual performance of the Spanish military, focusing in how the army carried out what today are known as Stability Operations and finally in some of the outcomes of the learning process that the Spanish army experienced to be able to pacify the territory and set the conditions for the most prosperous period of Northern Morocco up till then.

Contrary to expectations, producing this work on the opposite side of the Atlantic to where events took place, and without participation of the United States in those operations, it has not been a big impediment to find sources, particularly those not in English. The Internet and the Combined Arms Research Library staff have helped a lot also to access very valuable material.

The bibliography has greatly contributed to present a partial view of the campaign that is the object of this study mainly because most of the works concentrate on the period from 1921 to 1927 and in one particular area of the Protectorate: the Rif. Although this paper does not extend much more beyond 1927, it at least highlights the foundations that would allow the continuation of the Protectorate for nineteen more years.

Regardless of their particular theme, most of the books about the topic provide a more or less extensive treatment of the background for the conflict. Though they agree on the main facts, the interpretation varies quite a bit, so it is possible to provide a fairly balanced vision on the origin of the intervention of Spain in the Protectorate. In addition, this work has studied several contemporaneous books written at the end of 19th century and beginning of the 20th that provide

invaluable insights to the perceptions of the times.⁴ A capstone piece to understand the antecedents of the Spanish involvement in Morocco is the Ph.D. thesis of Pastor Garrigues, which has been the main source for the study of this period.⁵

Primary sources consulted have been mainly the memories or accounts of some of the protagonists or direct witnesses. In this particular case, it is very important to be aware of the biases of the authors. For instance, General Berenguer was so involved in the responsibilities process that his memories of the campaigns must be regarded with much caution. However, previous works are very useful to appreciate his background.⁶ The works of General Goded and General Jordana, authentic protagonists of the story not so concerned about responsibilities are more reliable.⁷ A similar case is the work of Martínez de Campos, who participated in some of the campaigns but not in so relevant positions as the previous writers.⁸ García Figueras and Herrera also experienced the campaigns, but in their book they incorporated much more than their observations into their impressive recompilation, which is a basic reference to follow the presence of Spain in Morocco along history, especially the second volume of documents.⁹ The Spanish Military Historic Service directed several years after the facts another compilation that constitutes

⁴ Jerónimo Becker. *España y Marruecos. Sus Relaciones Diplomáticas durante el Siglo XIX*, Madrid, Spain: Tipolitografía Raoul Péant, 1903. Serafín E Calderón. *Manual del Oficial en Marruecos*, Madrid, Spain: Imprenta de D. Ignacio Boix, 1844 and Eduardo Cañizares y Moyano, *Apuntes sobre Marruecos* (Madrid, Spain: Imprenta del Memorial de Ingenieros, 1895).

⁵ Francisco Manuel Pastor Garrigues, “España y la Apertura de la Cuestión Marroquí (1897-1904).” (PhD thesis. Universitat de València, 2006).

⁶ Dámaso Berenguer Fusté, *Campañas en el Rif y Yebala 1921-1922. Notas y Documentos de mi Diario de Operaciones*, Madrid, Spain: Sucesores de R. Velasco, 1923 and *La Guerra en Marruecos* (Ensayo de una Adaptación Táctica). (Madrid, Spain: Librería “Fernando Fé”, 1918).

⁷ Manuel Goded, *Marruecos. Las Etapas de la Pacificación*, Madrid, Spain: Compañía Iberoamericana de Publicaciones, 1932. and Francisco Gómez-Jordana Souza, *La Tramoya de Nuestra Actuación en Marruecos* (Málaga, Spain: Algazara, 2005).

⁸ Carlos Martínez de Campos y Serrano, *España Bélica. El Siglo XX. Marruecos* (Madrid, Spain: Aguilar, 1972).

⁹ Carlos Hernández de Herrera and Tomás García Figueras, *Acción de España en Marruecos* (Madrid, Spain: Imprenta Municipal, 1927).

a good shortcut to quite important pieces of the Military Archives.¹⁰ Relevant primary sources in English proceed from journalists like Vincent Sheean and Walter Harris (Harris was not only a journalist but an agent of Great Britain) that reported directly from Morocco.¹¹ Admiral Usborne, familiar with the area and the events from his assignment in Gibraltar, wrote a book more focused on the French side of the Protectorate, what allows for interesting comparisons.¹² Other origins for primary sources have been digital newspapers and library collections, in particular the ABC Spanish newspaper and the digital collection of the Spanish National Library.

Regarding secondary sources, the book of David Woolman is one of the most influential modern works written in English about the issue. It dealt mainly with the campaign in the Rif, but considered the whole protectorate and incorporated some reflections about the modern Morocco born after the Protectorate. Unfortunately his declared sympathy for the Riffians and some grave mistakes make it subject to criticism.¹³ Woolman has been the main inspiration for some brief accounts that have exaggerated his discourse to the point of devaluating them.¹⁴ C.R. Pennell provided a new outlook to the subject focusing thoroughly in the organization of the Moroccan side and specifically in the construction of the Rif Republic. He included sources from French and British Foreign Affairs Ministries and captured Rifi documents. However, he gave only a partial approach because he centered in the Rif and only until 1926.¹⁵ Finally, Sebastian Balfour offered a well-documented book with unedited sources and discoveries, in particular the use of

¹⁰ Servicio Histórico Militar. *Historia de las Campañas de Marruecos*, Tomos 1, 2, 3, 4. (Madrid, Spain: 1951).

¹¹ Walter B Harris, *France, Spain and the Rif* (London, United Kingdom: Edward Arnold & Co, 1927). and Vincent Sheean, *Adventures among the Riffi* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1926).

¹² C. V. Usborne, *The Conquest of Morocco* (London: Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd, 1936).

¹³ David S. Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968).

¹⁴ Robert B Asprey, *War in the Shadows. The Guerrilla in History* (New York: William Morrow, 1994), 263-276. and James M Perry, *Arrogant Armies: Great Military Disasters and the Generals Behind Them* (New York: John Wiley, 1996), 272-294.

¹⁵ Pennell, Richard C. *A Country with a Government and a Flag. The Rif War in Morocco 1921-1926* (Wisbech, United Kingdom: Middle East and North African Studies Press Ltd, 1986).

chemical substances by the Spaniards. However, the book is too much focused in the future repercussion of the Morocco Campaigns in the Spanish Civil War.¹⁶

In addition to Pennell, the insides on the Rifian party have been taken from Germain Ayache, and Zakya Daoud, both written in French, who offered a Moroccan perspective.¹⁷ Ayache maintained a nationalist thesis and the main value of his books were the Moroccan sources he incorporated but it was quite curious that the main sources he used to describe the Rifian society were one Spanish Officer writing in Arabic in the 30s and one American writing in the 50s.¹⁸

Concerning modern books in Spanish, the two main sources have been Juan Pando and Pablo La Porte.¹⁹ Both books are more oriented towards the Annual Disaster though and do not treat later events with detail. Pando stressed human dimensions of the combat and looked for higher responsibilities than those of Silvestre. La Porte set the Moroccan conflict in the international context and as another example of the crisis that the Spanish political system of the moment was suffering. For the latter period of the operations one very interesting thematic book is that of Jose Luis Villanova that focused on the figure of the “Cuerpo de Intervencion”, the final civic-military solution designed to represent the Spanish presence in the Protectorate once it was

¹⁶ Balfour, Sebastian. *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to Spanish Civil War*. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Germain Ayache, *Les Origines de la Guerre du Rif* (Paris, France: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1981) and Zakya Daoud, *Abdelkrim. Une Épopée d’Or et de Sang* (Paris, France: Segnier, 1999).

¹⁸ The mentioned officer is Emilio Blanco Izaga, Colonel of the *Cuerpo de Intervención*. First of all the fact that one Spanish Officer studied the Moroccan society and was able to write in shows that the Spanish Army was not as racist and violent. Second, the fact that Ayache has no other sources than occidental ones is quite significative of the lack of information about the Riffian society of the time also in Morocco. Ayache, *Les Origines*, 99.

¹⁹ Juan Pando Despierto, *Historia Secreta de Annual* (Madrid, Spain: Temas de Hoy, 1999) and Pablo La Porte Sáenz, *La Atraccion del Iman: El Desastre de Annual: Frente al Imperialismo Europeo y los Politicos Españoles (1921-1923)* (Madrid, Spain: Biblioteca Nueva, 2001).

pacified.²⁰ Mimoun Aziza also studied the later period of the protectorate but explored the social and economic impact of the Spanish protectorate on the local population.²¹

Whenever possible, references to English written sources were preferred, since one of the objectives of the monograph was to spread the knowledge of the topic among US Officers. Unless otherwise stated, the author is responsible for translations from Spanish, French or German sources. Spanish naming is preferred because there is not much uniformity in the English sources. In cases where big differences exist between the Spanish and English or Arabic names, both terms are included.

The Spanish Protectorate had in fact two zones, one in the south and the other in the north. Though the legal frame was the same for both, their development was completely separated and this work deals only with the Northern zone. The Southern part of the protectorate must not be mistaken though with the Spanish Sahara over which Spain exercised full sovereignty until 1975.

²⁰ Jose Luis Villanova Valero, *Protectorado de España en Marruecos: Organización Política y Territorial* (Barcelona, Spain: Bellaterra, 2004).

²¹ Mimoun Aziza, *La Sociedad Rifeña Frente al Protectorado Español de Marruecos 1912-1956* (Barcelona, Spain: Bellaterra, 2003).



Figure 1. Zones of Spanish Protectorate. Source: Merry, *Spanish Zones*, 331

Background

The relations between Spain and northern Africa may be traced as early in history as the historian is willing to look back. This monograph focuses in a timeframe that starts with the signature of the French-British agreement of 1904 and extends up to October 1927 when armed resistance in the Spanish Protectorate was defeated and the Protectorate reorganized as a pacified territory. Nonetheless, it includes some previous and posterior events that should be considered in order to understand some of the causes of the conflict and evaluate some of its outcomes.

Because of its proximity and history, Spain had many reasons to be involved in North African and Moroccan issues and had historically exerted quite an important influence in the area. One example is the fact that the Spanish currency was predominantly used in Morocco, and also that Spanish was the *Lingua Franca*.²² However, that relevant role was being challenged by the increasing presence of other countries, particularly England and France. While Spain had in 1895

²² Alfonso Merry del Val. "The Spanish Zones in Morocco," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 55, no 5 (May, 1920) 330. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1780445> (accessed September 25, 2010).

reduced considerably her practical involvement in Morocco, the rising involvement of France kept Morocco as a vital question of Spanish foreign relationships.²³

In 1895 Major Eduardo Cañizares y Moyano was about to publish a memoir of his time as member of a Spanish Military Mission in Morocco when the death of Sultan Muley Hassan obliged him to add one final appendix to his work. With first hand understanding of the country, he foresaw the risk that the fragile compromise between the European nations to maintain the status quo of the Empire could vanish if succesory disputes unleashed the “covered ambitions of some powers.”²⁴ Acknowledging the youth and poor health of Muley Abd el Aziz, the designated heir, the existence of two opposition parties leaded by two of his brothers and the state of revolt in two provinces, Cañizares wishfully hoped that the new Sultan would be able to overcome such impediments and just have to deal with the same enemies than his father did, the inhabitants of the mountains.²⁵

At the beginning of the 20th century, Cañizares’ wishes had not been fulfilled. All authors agree to depict the situation as unruly although they differ in judging the causes for this state of affairs.²⁶ From the Spanish perspective at the time, shared by the international community, the situation was another episode of the same old story, for traditionally the different Sultans of Morocco had only exercised control over a portion of the country called the *Blad el Mahkzen* while another portion, the *Blad es Siba*, was officially considered rebel territory.²⁷ The northern part of the country was part of the *Siba* region which the Sultan only controlled effectively for

²³ Pastor, *España y la Apertura*, 1563-1565.

²⁴ Cañizares, *Apuntes*, 215.

²⁵ Ibid., 218-219.

²⁶ Woolman, *Rebels*, 4. Muley Hassan died in 1894 and Ba Hamed, his Chamberlain stayed in power until he died in 1900. Abd el Aziz, second son of Muley Hassan, came to rule.

²⁷ Merry del Val, *The Spanish Zones*, 332.

brief periods after military punitive expeditions.²⁸ For the Spanish, the circumstances were aggravated this time by the menace that France could take advantage of the power vacuum. Modern scholars like Ayache claim that the different tribes had always recognized the Sultan as the common chief who led them in the fight against the Christian invader.²⁹ For him the Sultan, by relying in foreign countries, had lost his authority to the eyes of his subjects and their anti-European reaction was the proof of a nationalistic movement.³⁰ Pennell and Balfour, as well as most of Spanish contemporary scholarship, deny the absolute lack of control of the Sultan in the *Blad es Siba* and recognize the role of foreign influence in destabilizing his authority, but admit the situation was chaotic.³¹

Before one of his brothers challenged the authority of Muley Abd el Aziz an impostor who claimed to be his eldest brother did. His name was *Jilani Zerhouni* but he would be known as *Bu Hamara* and in 1902 he declared himself pretender, or *Roghi*, in Taza.³² In 1907 *Bu Hamara* defeated the Sultan troops in the vicinity of Melilla and became the real authority in North-eastern Morocco.³³ On the west, the real master was not the Sultan either but *Mulay Ahmed er Raisuli*, better known as el Raisuni as he is being named in this work.³⁴ El Raisuni was a very curious personage, descendant from one of the most famous *murabits* in Morocco, well educated in the traditional Moroccan way and also a notorious bandit. His relations with the last Sultans

²⁸ Cañizares, *Apuntes*, 47, 49. The author includes expeditions by Muley Soliman in the 1820,s and Muley Hassan in the 1890,s.

²⁹ Ayache, *Origines*, 45.

³⁰ Ibid., 46.

³¹ Pennell, *A Country*, 32. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 12. Villanova, *El Protectorado*, 218 and 223.

³² Ayache, *Les Origines*, 129.

³³ Woolman, *Rebels*, 38.

³⁴ Ibid., 13, 45. It appears to be a small detail, but many authors discuss the real spelling of his name. Woolman calls him Raisuli. Ayache, *Les Origines*, 256. Ayache, who uses Arabic names, calls him “Risouni” and argues that the Spanish corrupted his name as “Raïssouni” or even worst “Raïssouli.” Pennell, *A Country*, 31. Pennell uses transliteration from Arabic but however calls him “Al-Raisuli.” Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 36. Balfour names him “Raisuni” and claims that the Spanish referred to him mistakenly as “Raisuli.”

ranged from being imprisoned to being named “*pasha* of the north” while rebelling against two of them.³⁵

Summary of the Campaigns

The first serious incursion of Spanish troops outside the Spanish territories after the Melilla war of 1893 took place in January 1908 to provide symbolic support to a Sultan *Mehala* – military unit- that had been left abandoned after *Bu Hamara* defeated them in 1907. Days later, the Spanish established a garrison in the same place to avoid the installation of French traders. In July 1909 the murdering of some workers in one Spanish mine initiated a violent campaign that finished in December with heavy losses for Spain and whose impact in the peninsula caused serious riots in Barcelona, the so called *Semana Trágica* or tragic week.³⁶ Since then until the formal establishment of the Spanish Zone of Influence in 1913, the Army would be expanding his presence around Ceuta and Melilla and would occupy the area between Larache, Alcazarquivir and Arcila. These advances were motivated in part by the presence of French troops close to or even inside areas that had been assigned to Spain in the 1904 French-British agreement and in part by the need to establish a security area around the Spanish cities due to the hostile attitude of the tribes. Apart from the combats of 1909, main operations took place during the Kert Campaign from 1911 to 1912 west of Melilla. In Larache operations started in 1911 in cooperation with el Raisuni and finished in 1913 against him. Around Ceuta the Spanish occupied Tetuan and a narrow strip along the road linking both cities. Occasionally heavy fights produced important casualties, but in general operations were very limited and subject to direct approval from Madrid. With World War I, operations almost ceased in Melilla whereas in Ceuta, again relying in the support of el Raisuni, some advances were made towards Tetuan. In Larache

³⁵ Pennell, *A Country*, 32.

³⁶ Stanley G Payne, *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 107-109. Woolman, *Rebels*, 42.

communication with Tanger was opened and after 1916 operations stopped. War in Europe had though a great impact on the resistance, too. German agents tried to raise the natives against France affecting as well their attitude towards Spain. Particularly significant in this regard was the evolution of the Abd el Krim family that would pass from being the most important co-operators with Spain in the Rif to the main leaders of the opposition movement.³⁷



Figure 2. From left to right Mohamed Abd el Krim, his father Abd el Krim el Jatabi, two executives of the mining company SETOLAZAR and M'hammed Abd el Krim. Source: Madariaga, *España*, cover.

With the end of WW I, operations resumed with more vigour under pressure of both France and Great Britain. However, the situation of the Army had not improved, and the tactics employed had not changed. Still operations consisted in employing strong columns to establish new advanced posts or *blocaos* that were let on their own, poorly manned and protected and even

³⁷ Abd el Krim el Jatabi was an alfaquí or “faquih” (a person with religious and legal knowledge) in Ajdir, a village in the Beni Urriaguel tribe just in front of the island of Alhucemas. He was also *cadí* or judge and one of the “friendly” people that received money from Spain to encourage the Spanish cause. His elder son Mohammed Abd el Krim would be the most enduring leader of the opposition against the Spanish protectorate and has become known as Abd el Krim, though that was in reality his father’s name. The youngest son M’hammed would be also a fundamental part of his brother’s government. Woolman, *Rebels*, 75. Pennell, *A Country*, 49-50. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 47. Ayache, *Les Origines*, 156-158. María Rosa de Madariaga, *España y el Rif. Crónica de una Historia casi Olvidada*. 2nd ed. (Melilla, Spain: UNED-Centro Asociado de Melilla, 2000): 398, 401-2. Sánchez Pérez, Andrés. “Abdelkrim”, *Revista de Historia Militar* no 34 (January-June 1973): 130.

worse logistically supported. Operations in the three *Comandancias* of Melilla, Ceuta and Larache were conducted independently but there was a common goal to unite Melilla and Ceuta progressing from both areas towards Alhucemas Bay, where the core of the resistance was starting to come together under the leadership of Mohamed Abd el Krim. In Melilla Major General Silvestre established a long and fragile line of 135 outposts that absorbed almost all the units under his command and reached Abarrán in 1921, more than 100 kilometres west of Melilla.³⁸ In the west the High Commissioner, Major General Dámaso Berenguer was acting in practice as *Comandante General* of Ceuta and Larache. He managed to connect by road Ceuta, Tetuan and Larache and started the expansion eastwards reaching Xauen in 1920. By 1921 el Raisuni was encircled and almost defeated.

At the end of July 1921 the natives, following directions of Abd el Krim, attacked the most advanced positions in the east. Silvestre, fearing to be surrounded in camp Annual, ordered to withdraw. Under strong pressure of the enemy and with only one route available, the withdrawal turned into a desperate race towards Melilla under the ruthless pursuit of the natives from all the tribes. At the beginning of August the garrisons spread all over the Melilla *Comandancia* had been abandoned except the city of Melilla and Monte Arruit where more than 3,000 survivors were trapped under siege. On August 9, when no relief from Melilla was expected any longer, the acting Commander, General Navarro, agreed to surrender to the chieftain who was commanding the siege force. However, most of the besieged would be massacred and some held prisoners after having given up their weapons.³⁹

³⁸ Pando, *Historia Secreta*, 20, 45.

³⁹ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 69-75. Martinez, *España Bélica*, 246-241. The most detailed and summarized information about the Disaster of Annual can be found in Fernando Caballero Poveda, "Marruecos. La Campaña del 21 en Cifras Reales (I)", *Revista Ejército* no 522 (July 1983): 81-94 and "Marruecos. La Campaña del 21 en Cifras Reales (II)", *Revista Ejército* no 523 (August 1983): 77-85.

As a consequence of the Spanish defeat Abd el Krim became the leader of the resistance and started to organize an independent state with stable institutions and a regular army. Operations in the west stopped completely and all efforts focused in Melilla. Nevertheless Spain was unable to articulate a clear strategy for Morocco and by 1923 the situation in all areas was almost as it was before the disaster.⁴⁰ The rout had also caused a political turmoil in Spain that contributed to the *pronunciamiento* –coup– of General Miguel Primo de Rivera in Barcelona in September 1923. Despite the promise of the General to solve the Moroccan problem, more urgent problems in the peninsula kept the situation in Africa on hold, at least for Spain. Abd el Krim continued his policy of building his independent state and expand his rule over neighbour tribes, against which he had to use his growing military apparatus. He managed to defeat el Raisuni and became the only opposing party in the Spanish Zone.⁴¹ Several attempts for a peaceful solution stalled against his claims for Rif sovereignty and independence.⁴² The passivity on the Spanish side and the strong position that Abd el Krim was achieving forced the evacuation of the Spanish positions to a defensive line that allowed for future resumption of the offensive. This withdrawal raised much criticism in the army and caused again a considerable number of casualties.⁴³

The attack of Abd el Krim to the French Protectorate finally triggered the cooperation between Spain and France and both countries planned for coordinated operations. On September 1925 the landing at Alhucemas Bay marked the return of Spain to the offensive and, together with the attack of the French forces from the south, signalled the beginning of the end of Abd el Krim. The resistance had not only been militarily defeated for the first time in many years, but their

⁴⁰ Martínez, *España Bélica*, 262.

⁴¹ Pennell, *A Country*, 99, 107, 108-9, 146, 180. Abd el Krim resorted to force and violence to achieve his acceptance from other tribes. Methods ranged from fines and detentions to executions, burning of houses and crops and even military expeditions as against Raisuni, whom he defeated and captured in February 1925.

⁴² Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 95-96. Primo de Rivera made last attempts to reach a peaceful agreement.

⁴³ Payne, *Politics*, 210-212.

supply lines were cut and their territory was also economically isolated. In spite of these circumstances Abd el Krim rejected the peace conditions proposed by French and Spanish at Uxda peace conference in April 1926 and both countries renewed combined operations that forced the surrender of Abd el Krim to the French in May 1926. The resistance was not completely defeated in the Spanish area until July 1927 and until 1934 in the French Protectorate.

The Spanish had learnt however that defeating the armed resistance was not enough to consider the zone appeased. Starting in 1925 a systematic plan to achieve the actual pacification started in the areas where fight had already ceased. The plan was based in disarmament of the natives and the effective organization of an administrative structure based in the *Cuerpo de Intervención* or supervision corps. The Spanish Protectorate in Morocco remained under military administration until 1956.

The Environment

The area over which Spain held responsibility comprised about 7,700 square miles of the north of Morocco bounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Muluya River to the east, an irregular line of rivers and mountain ranges to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The maximum straight distance east to west was 200 miles and an average 60 miles north to south. Most of this zone was a mass of mountains some of which rose over 6.000 feet and there were only four areas of relatively level ground: two narrow strips from Tangiers to the Lucus and from Ceuta to Tetuan in the west and two bigger areas to the east, one between the Rif Mountains and the Muluya River in the south east and the Garet area surrounding Melilla. The mountainous area was comprised of two main ranges, the Jebala and the Rif.⁴⁴ The first one was located in the west and runs North to South from the Straits of Gibraltar to the French Zone. The Rif Mountains

⁴⁴ Merry, "The Spanish Zones", 335. The name Jebala proceeds from the Arabic Jebel, mountain. Woolman, *Rebels*, 20 the name Rif has the same origin and means edge.



Figure 3. Map of Spanish Morocco. Source, Woolman, *Rebels*.

formed a soft arc in an east to west direction starting in the limit of the eastern border of the zone and finishing in the Jebala Ridge. The climate of the area was mostly Mediterranean with areas of Atlantic climate to the west. Rain was scarce and seasonal, provoking hot and very dried summers. Water was a “precious commodity” and wells become really important assets.

The only existing cities in the Zone, were located in the western area: Tangiers, Tetuan, Arcila and Xauen (this was not accessible to the Europeans until 1920). Although not trustworthy figures are available, all authors agree that the Zone of Influence was quite densely populated.⁴⁵ The majority of this population was ethnically Berber, and only in the Jebala a certain Arabic mix was present. As a result, whereas in the Rif the most common language was a Berber dialect, Arabic was more used in the Jebala. Berber was not a written language, so the very few documents produced in the area were written in Arabic. All the physical, ethnic and linguistic features made the Jebalis much closer to the *Makhzen* than the Rifis. More or less Arabicized, all tribes followed a basic pattern of organization. What has been translated as tribe was in reality a *cabila* (from the Arabic qabila), the biggest association of people descending from a common

⁴⁵ Merry, “The Spanish Zones”, 343. The estimations of the Spanish authorities in 1920 was slightly over a million, 560.000 of them in the Rif.

ancestor. *Cabilas* were not homogeneous but composed of various subdivisions up to the single family and councils or assemblies at the different levels solved the issues that arose among families or clans by the imposition of fines.⁴⁶ When or where the *Makhzen* had influence, a structure of *cadis* who administered justice and *caids* who collected taxes was imposed over the Berber traditional organization.⁴⁷ All authors emphasize the peculiarities of the Beni Urriaguel tribe as the most fierce and reluctant to any exterior influence in the area. Another interesting detail is that the delimitation of French and Spanish zones was based in geographical features instead of tribal limits, thus several bordering tribes were artificially split.

By far, the most unifying trait in the Spanish Zone was Religion. Islam was brought to the region by Arabs in the 9th century and was adopted by the local population.⁴⁸ Islam was not only a religious practice but also influenced the organization of the society, especially as repartition of power was concerned. If the Sultan held any authority in the area it was based on his religious status and the main cause of opposition to Europeans was allegedly defense of Islam. However, it is important to note, if briefly, three points regarding the practice of Islam in the region. First *sharia* law had not completely substituted the customary law or *urf*. Second, the authority that *sherifs*, descendants from the prophet, have in Islam was contested in the region by that of the *murabits* whose authority was based on local prestige, miracles or healing abilities. Finally the religious brotherhoods or *tariqas* were source not only of spiritual and social power,

⁴⁶ Authors differ in their description of the different subdivisions but basically agree that individual families were grouped in lineages and those in one or more intermediate levels up to the cabila or tribe. At each of those levels, representatives of the previous level discussed and solved their issues. Woolman, *Rebels*, 21-22. Pennell, *A Country*, 25. Ayache, *Les Origines*, 100. Villanova, *El Protectorado*, 222. The Spanish authorities basically distinguished cabilas and fractions and took these divisions into account when dealing with the natives. What is most curious is that almost all the authors refer either to an American, David Hart or a Spanish soldier, Emilio Blanco to deal with this topic.

⁴⁷ Ayache, *Les Origines*, 100-101. Ayache is the only author who claims, in line with his nationalistic thesis, that the authority of the *Makhzen* mixed seamlessly into the local organization. For most authors this relation was far from natural, see for instance Pennell, *A Country*, 29.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

but played an important economic role since they were the owners of the communal land or *habus*.⁴⁹

Economically northern Morocco was a very poor region. Very little land was cultivated, production was just enough to cover basic needs and cultivation techniques were rudimentary. The few fertile areas in the Atlantic coast and around Melilla were not exploited and it was usual for the men to immigrate to Algeria during the recollection. Apart from agriculture, economic development consisted of little stockbreeding, some fishing activity, minor commerce and piracy. The only wealth of the region was supposed to be the abundance of mineral resources.⁵⁰ Much has been said about the exploitation appetites of the Spanish mining companies but the truth is that those expectations were not only Spanish and that very soon the reality about the limited possibilities displaced the fantasies. Since there was almost no economic development, there were very few ways to raise taxes and to self-finance the area. Infrastructure was non-existent and moreover, due to the physical configuration of the terrain, was very hard and expensive to build. This lack of communications prevented any commercial or industrial development and the establishment of any administrative control. In reality, as the Zone was finally configured in 1912, the best natural way of communication was the sea, but the coast lacked ports and Spain a fleet, therefore sea transportation played a minor role.⁵¹

This section has pictured a really unstable political situation. Deeper analysis has shown that instability was not occasional but rooted on a very complex society settled down on an extremely harsh geography and with almost no economic support. It is no wonder then that

⁴⁹ Pennell, *A Country*, 28-29. These remarks are very important because religion was used as an argument for opposition against the Europeans, despite the fact that both the Spanish and the French respected Islam. In reality Islam was used and abused in the internal fight for power.

⁵⁰ Aziza, *La Sociedad*, 33-40.

⁵¹ Abel Abet i Mas, "La Ordenación del Territorio en el Protectorado Español en Marruecos", *Revista Aldaba* nº 31 (October, 2001): 346. The natural way to link Eastern Morocco and Algeria to the Atlantic coast goes through Taza and Fez, part of this zone was to be in the Spanish zone in the agreement of 1904, but finally fell under French responsibility.

Spanish political authorities were more than reluctant to take any step to modify the current status quo, especially in the aftermath of the 98 disaster. The next section adds to this picture the international circumstances that influenced the decisions to engage in Morocco.

International Implications of the Moroccan Protectorate

Traditionally the involvement of Spain in the Protectorate over Morocco has been explained in terms of Spanish internal affairs. The most common explanation given by scholars is that the loss of her last Atlantic and Pacific colonies in 1898 launched Spain in a tardy colonial race in order to replace the gone territories with new ones. This would satisfy the need for international prestige, the economic interest of the beneficiaries of business with the colonies and especially the need for revenge of a humiliated Army.⁵² This section provides a much more nuanced explanation of the involvement of Spain in Morocco with a threefold purpose: first, to clearly state that what was at stake for Spain was not to increase its power as could be the case of the colonial powers of the time, but pure national security interests; second, to highlight the numerous international influences Spain had to surmount in addition to the already formidable task of pacifying her assigned portion of the Moroccan Protectorate and thirdly; to establish a reference against which the success or failure of this campaign can be assessed.

The first reason for Spain to be interested in Morocco was an elemental geographical one: the Iberian Peninsula and Africa were, and still are, only 12 kilometres apart. Consequently Spain and Morocco have been neighbours for centuries, long before either of them became organized as the states known at the time. The second reason was that Spain had territory on the African continent since 1476, when Santa Cruz del Mar Pequeña, on the Atlantic coast, was incorporated to the crown of Castile. Later Melilla came under the crown in 1496, then Peñón de Vélez de la

⁵² Woolman, *Rebels*, 36-37, Harris, *France*, 50, and Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly* 10.

Gomera in 1564, Ceuta in 1640 and the island of Alhucemas was occupied in 1673.⁵³ Finally the incorporation of the Chafarinas islands in 1848 serves to explain the third reason that brought the Moroccan issues to the first line of the Spanish strategic interests by the end of the 19th Century: the escalating presence of France, which after launching the conquest of Algeria in 1830, continued to show expansionist intentions towards Morocco.⁵⁴

Morocco was not only a regional Mediterranean issue any more. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 increased the value of the access to the Mediterranean for Great Britain whose presence in the region had been growing for commercial reasons since the second half of 19th century.⁵⁵ Spain was sucked into the “race” for Morocco by the global disputes of France and Great Britain. The 1904 French-British agreement intended to solve the differences between the two countries, but was also aimed to send a signal to Germany.⁵⁶ For the agreement to be possible, both nations had to recognize the right of Spain to preserve her interests in areas already under her influence.⁵⁷ In 1904, however, Spain was not in a situation to get more involved in Morocco.⁵⁸ Spain’s self-recognition of her inability to maintain new colonies elsewhere, counters

⁵³ Peñón de Vélez was first conquered in 1508 and re conquered definitively in 1564. Ceuta was conquered by the Portuguese in 1415 was finally inherited by the King of Spain in 1640.

⁵⁴ Hernández and García, *Acción de España*, 7. In 1844 France declared war and defeated the Moroccans at Isly, due to the support that the Algerian rebels were receiving from Morocco. In 1848, renewed fears to the possibility of the immediate expansion to Morocco motivated the occupation of the Chafarinas Islands by Spanish troops sent from Málaga in a race against a French expedition.

⁵⁵ Pennell, *A Country*, 10. British presence in Morocco started to increase by 1850. In 1856, the signature of the British Moroccan treaty opened up the market. According to Woolman, Great Britain was the most influential power in Morocco at the beginning of the century. Woolman, *Rebels*, 6.

⁵⁶ Usborne, *The Conquest*, 76.

⁵⁷ Pastor, *España y la Apertura*, 11. After the opening of the Suez Canal, the Straits of Gibraltar increased its natural strategic importance, and Britain did not want France to be on the other side. A “second order” country like Spain was much more convenient for her. On the other hand, Spain did not feel strong enough to proceed in Morocco without the previous agreement of both powers. That is the reason why previous bilateral conversations first with Great Britain and latter with France never succeeded. On this matter Pastor offers though very interesting data that contradicts the traditional vision that Spain did not sign a treaty with France in 1902 fearing that Britain would not accept it.

⁵⁸ La Porte, *La Atracción*, 35. La Porte highlights that the agreement was negotiated without Spanish participation and Spain was only accepting it, even reluctantly.

the argument that the main reason for Spain to intervene in Morocco was the loss of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines in 1898.

According to many works, the loss of the colonies provoked also economic interests to turn their eyes towards Morocco. The creation of several societies advocating for a definite commitment of Spain in Morocco is usually argued as a proof of this tendency. However, most of those entities were created long before the Spanish-American War.⁵⁹ Mining was the most appealing field for economic development, and once again, the Spanish were not alone. By the end of 19th century Morocco had already drawn the attention of European steel industry and equal trade rights had been the main point of discussion in the 1880 Madrid Conference.⁶⁰ It would have been foolish from Spanish investors not to compete for such a close market. This argument does not discard the influence of economic groups in the establishment of the Protectorate, but rather than a major thrust for the future posture in Morocco, they were just another contributor.

The Spanish-American War had though one interesting impact in Spanish diplomacy that is often overlooked. This was to worsen her relations with Great Britain, allied of the North American, to the extent that the possibility of reaching bilateral agreements about Morocco disappeared and Spain fell closer to the French orbit.⁶¹

What then did Spain want to achieve in Morocco? Reading some authors it seems that the objective of Spain was to invade and exploit all of Morocco.⁶² The reality is that Spain had always been clear that her objectives in Morocco should be limited for economic reasons and

⁵⁹ Pastor, *España y la Apertura*, 735-743. Pastor provides a complete description of the reactivation of the economic investment in Morocco after 1880, showing how this movement and the theory of the “pacific penetration” preceded the 98 disaster.

⁶⁰ Sasse, Dirk, *Franzosen, Briten und Deutsche im Rifkrieg 1921-1926* (Munich, Germany: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 2006), 206.

⁶¹ Pastor, *España y la Apertura*, 455.

⁶² Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 3. According to this author, the Spanish Military played a “dominant role” in the “European invasion of North Africa” at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

because in the aftermath of a military debacle, more warlike adventures were out of question.⁶³

Colonial conquest was out of the reach of Spain in such a complex international environment.

The formula of the Protectorate was an acceptable option for a nation debating between life and death.⁶⁴

The 1912 Moroccan-French agreement gave France the authorization to “proceed to such military occupation of the Moroccan territory as it might deem necessary for the maintenance of good order and the security of commercial transactions, and to exercise every police supervision on land and within the Moroccan waters.”⁶⁵ In November of the same year, the Spanish-French treaty recognized that “in the Spanish zone of influence, Spain has the right to maintain peace in the said zone and to assist the Moroccan Government in introducing all the administrative, economic, financial, judicial and military reforms which it requires, as well as such new regulations and changes in existing regulations which may be necessitated by these reforms.”⁶⁶

In practice these agreements gave France and Spain total control over Morocco. However, the provisions of the agreements established that the Spanish zone of influence “will remain under the civil and religious authority of the Sultan.”⁶⁷ This meant that, whatever the entitlements Spain had received from the Sultan through France, Morocco would continue to be under the rule of the Sultan and Islam. Later sections study how this condition affected the establishment of the Protectorate.

⁶³ Martínez, *España Bélica*, 34, 38.

⁶⁴ Pastor, *España y la Apertura*, 456. The author refers to the famous speech of Lord Salisbury to the Primerose League about the living and dying nations pronounced in the Albert Hall on May 4, 1898.

⁶⁵ Protectorate Treaty Between France and Morocco, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Supplement: Official Documents (July, 1912), 207

⁶⁶ Treaty Between France and Spain Regarding Morocco, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Supplement: Official Documents (April, 1913), 81

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The arguments exposed so far try to broaden the simplistic interpretation that Spain embarked in a new colonial adventure to compensate for the definitive loss of her old empire. At the end of 19th century, a new international strategic concept was developing and Morocco had a role to play in the global fight for raw materials and trade routes. Spain could not stay out of the struggle for such strategic point in her backyard and the Protectorate offered an affordable solution.⁶⁸

International considerations did not finish with the signature of the diplomatic agreements but continued while putting them into practice. During World War I German and Turkish agents tried to revolt Morocco against France. Both Abd el Krim and el Raisuni were pro Germans and received political, economic and material support from Germany.⁶⁹ However, the real appeal of the Central Powers for the Moroccans was Turkey. There is less evidence of practical support from the Ottoman country, but its instigation to rebel against the European countries was clear and particularly important for, as a Muslim country, Turkey provided a great religious prestige.⁷⁰ For her part France adopted a policy of economy of forces in Morocco in order to cope with the operations in Europe and thus, to prevent any impact on his area, persuaded Spain to stop any progress just in a moment when resistance on the Spanish side was very low.⁷¹ This inactivity bought time for the challengers to organize and to equip themselves and aborted the creation of a pro Spanish party in the Beni Urriaguel tribe. It is doubtful whether such party had ever been successful, but the arrest of Abd el Krim at the request of French

⁶⁸ Fernando Caballero Echevarría, notes from a monograph project sent by e-mail to the author, August 18, 2010.

⁶⁹ Pennell, *A Country*, 53-54. Usborne, *The Conquest*, 223. Woolman, *Rebels*, 156.

⁷⁰ Ayache, *Les Origines*, 204-205, 217. Abd el Krim declared to the Spanish that the Young Turks movement was instigating the revolt of all Muslim world against the Allies.

⁷¹ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 45. Martínez de Campos, *España Bélica*, 157-158.

authorities for his pro-German activities contributed unquestionably to distance this party from Spain.⁷²

Traditionally the bold resumption of operations in 1919 has been attributed to the appointment of Generals Berenguer and Silvestre –particularly the last one– to the Protectorate, but this explanation is incomplete without the appropriate international context. Once war was over, it was time for France to resume her operations and to demand Spain to do the same on her area with the threat that otherwise they would do it. However, this exigency was not accompanied by the necessary coordination on either side. Spain complained several times about the smuggling that was taking place from the French Zone and Lyautey feared that the resistance movement could extend to the French area and thus preferred to let the Spanish cope with it alone.⁷³ England had never desired a French hegemony in Morocco and, faced with that possibility, also pushed Spain to fulfil her commitments.⁷⁴

International relations played also an important role in the support to the Rif party. Abd el Krim had based his movement on a strong and western like Army and he relied on several advisers and technicians to build it up and to give his movement a certain degree of international credibility.⁷⁵ He also tried to win international recognition for his Rif Republic and asked for support from Great Britain where his sympathizers established a Rif Committee, tried to bring his case to the Society of Nations and received the support of communist movement.⁷⁶ All these

⁷² Woolman, *Rebels*, 78.

⁷³ Payne, *Politics*, 152. La Porte, *La Atracción*, 136-176. The whole chapter that La Porte dedicates to France's attitude towards Spain has a quite descriptive title. "Neutral indifference."

⁷⁴ Germain Ayache, *La Guerre du Rif*. (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1996) : 48-49 Daoud, *Abdelkrim*, 91.

⁷⁵ Sasse, *Franzosen*, 7.

⁷⁶ Woolman, *Rebels*, 158-159. Ayache, *Les Origines*, 13-14. La Porte, *La Atracción*, Documento nº 5. Daoud, *Abdelkrim*, 196.

efforts contributed to the international prestige of Abd el Krim in the anti-colonial circles and to obscure the role of the Spanish Army in the campaigns.

This section has tried to frame appropriately the proceedings of Spain in Morocco in the international environment and to understand the many influences that the Army had to deal with during the implementation of the Protectorate. This background is necessary to understand in next chapter the National Strategy developed by Spain to resolve the problem. It is also important to figure out the objectives Spain was pursuing, which were no others than maintaining her stakes over the Straits of Gibraltar, one area that defined –and still does– Spain’s international strategic role.

Spain’s National Strategy

Nations do not wage war for war's sake, but in pursuance of policy. The military objective is only the means to a political end. Hence the military objective should be governed by the political objective, subject to the basic condition that policy does not demand what is militarily –that, is practically– impossible. Thus any study of the problem ought to begin and end with the question of policy.⁷⁷

Many authors assess the proceeding of the Army in the establishment of the Protectorate for the impact it caused in the future political life of Spain in the 20th Century. Thus, Balfour makes the argument that the campaigns in Morocco forged the brutal military elite that would provoke and conduct the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939.⁷⁸ For La Porte, the defeat of Annual was a “magnet” that attracted the crisis of the *Restauración* in Spain with the military coup of Primo de Rivera.⁷⁹ This monograph does not question these opinions but considers that the perception of the Spanish armed forces’ performance gets distorted if examined to the light of events still to happen –especially when talking about coups and civil wars–. Therefore, this section investigates why the military became the main instrument of the Government policy to

⁷⁷ B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*. 2nd ed (New York: Signet Book, 1974), 338.

⁷⁸ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 3.

⁷⁹ La Porte, *La Atracción*, 24, 212.

establish the Protectorate but free of the influence of future facts that surely are relevant, but cannot provide any explanation, simply because they had not yet happened.

The section discusses first how the government, under less military influence than usually considered, designed a national strategy that involved almost all elements of governance, but by not allocating the necessary resources, the only instrument available for that strategy turned to be the Army.⁸⁰ The section continues by showing how the military never acted independently but always under the strict control of the government. The third part of this section shows that the armed forces did not have a unitary approach to the protectorate but, on the contrary, the policy regarding Morocco caused an internal crisis in the institution. The section ends by examining the role that the strategy developed by Abd el Krim to guide the resistance had in militarizing the disputes, a responsibility that usually is charged only on the Spanish side.

After the signature of the 1904 agreement Spain continued her policy in Morocco with no other guidance than maintaining the status quo and without increasing force deployment in Morocco. However, neither the internal revolts in Morocco nor the French expansionism allowed for passivity. Both developments required, as soon as 1909, an unexpected military augmentation, which was withdrawn as soon as the situation was under control, demonstrating that the military did not have enough influence to provoke the military escalation for which has been traditionally blamed.⁸¹

Only in February 1913 a Royal Decree laid out the first structure for the Protectorate. A Moroccan *Khalifa* was to represent the Sultan in the Zone of Influence and a High Commissioner, the highest representative of all elements of the Spanish State, was to be his Spanish counterpart.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 46-47. La Porte claims the international pressure as the main reason for the preponderance of military over civilian action and adds the opinion of other authors who argue that physical and human constitution of the Protectorate required military intervention.

⁸¹ Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, I-43. Before the incidents of July 1909 the Garrison of Melilla and the surrounding positions numbered 6.178 troops. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 26. Up to 40.000 reinforcements arrived during the operations, but finally only 20.000 remained to take care of an area expanded over 17.000 square kilometres.

The national strategy devised by the government consisted in supporting the creation of a native administration for the *Makhzen* based in the *Khalifa* and the actual representatives of the tribes that would be supervised by a parallel Spanish administration. A strong development of infrastructure, education, health care and commerce would attract the Moroccans. If needed, locally raised police forces with the help of Spanish troops were to enforce order.⁸² The real problem with this outline of strategy was not whether it was sound or not but that the only capable agency close to Morocco was the Army. Even if the government had committed the necessary money and had disposed of the necessary personnel, it would have required a lot of time to stand up a brand new colonial administration. But the Government stated very clearly in the Royal Decree how limited the intervention would be:

This intervention is legally one of foreign character. It will not be done directly but through the *xeriffian* authorities and it is to such an extent internationally conditioned, that for many administrative issues it will be required to proceed constantly with the agreement of other Powers...

Suspensions inspired by our former colonial policies may incite fears that ... the modest organization that now begins will be further expanded, with the subsequent damage to the public service and to the Treasury.

The government of Your Majesty, that so carefully examines the public opinion, considers that such fears will disappear by realizing that only the more indispensable personnel will be employed...

There is not in Spain such a strong public opinion as the one in our neighbouring Republic that encourages the colonial party to be actively engaged in the economic development of the Mogreb Empire.⁸³

The Army happened to be the only agency in the government able to respond, but always constrained by an unfavourable public opinion, strong dependence on foreign policies, and minimum expenditure.⁸⁴ The new colonial civil and military organization was so “modest” that the “indispensable personnel employed” in March 1913 were one civilian secretary and three

⁸² BOZIM n° 1, 45-50.

⁸³ BOZIM n° 1, 34-37.

⁸⁴ Víctor Morales Lezcano, *El Colonialismo Hispanofrancés en Marruecos* (Madrid, Spain: Siglo Veintiuno de España, 1976), 144. Figure 1 shows the low budgets dedicated to Morocco, and in particular how most of that Budget was dedicated to the maintenance of the army, with very few funds remaining for civil action.

interpreters for the High Commissioner and seven officials for the civilian departments, including the heads of them.⁸⁵ Poor administrative structure and command and control relationships became a fourth constraint for the army's proceedings.

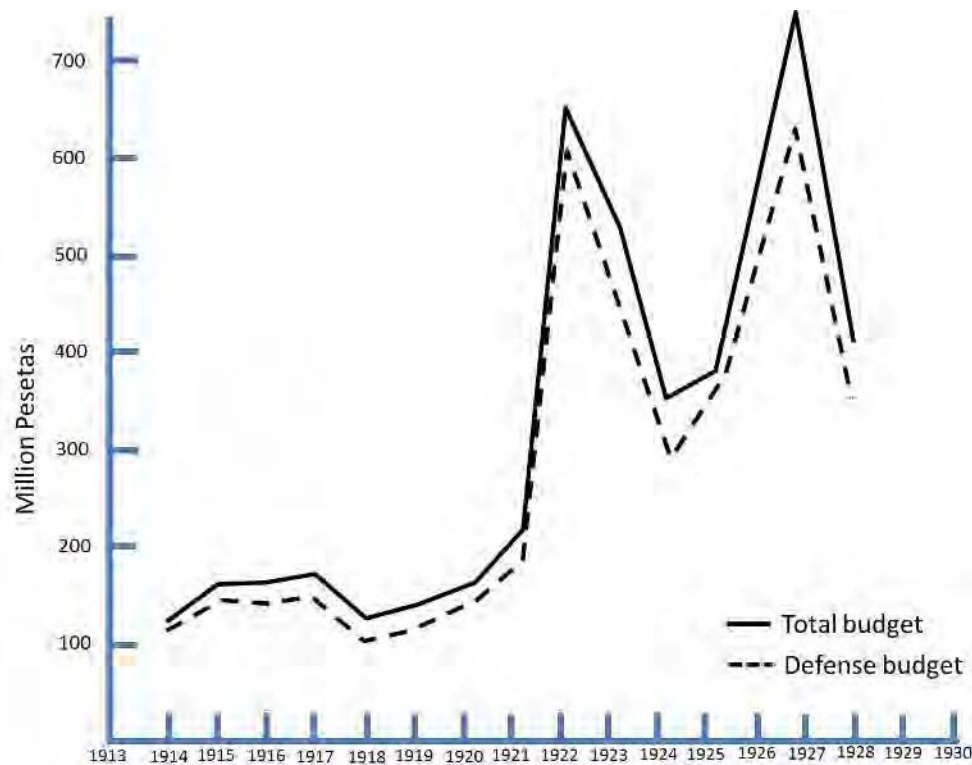


Figure 4. Total and defense Budget for Morocco 1913-1930. Source: Morales, *El Colonialismo*, 144.

The High Commissioner depended on the Department of State for everything except military issues, for which he fell under the Departments of War and Navy. For civil issues, the High Commissioner counted on three special departments, those of Native Affairs, Economic Development, and Financial Affairs.⁸⁶ On the government side a new Section for Morocco inside the Ministry of State was to be theoretically in charge of centralizing all Protectorate issues but, any department that carried out activities there was entitled to direct them technically from

⁸⁵ BOZIM n° 2, 111-112.

⁸⁶ Woolman, *Rebels*, 58. The monograph has adopted the English translation provided by Woolman.

Madrid. Finally the Delegation of the Ministry of State at Tangier continued to act independently.⁸⁷ This complicated organization was far from achieving the desired unity of command nor were the military command and control arrangements effective. The High Commissioner was to be the Inspector General of the *Comandantes Generales* in Ceuta, Melilla, and Larache, without direct command over them. Those in turn had the initiative for all “police” operations but were to report to the High Commissioner and to the Government of important operations and “will not execute, without previous authorization of the Government and knowledge of the High Commissioner those which affect or may affect the general policy.”⁸⁸ Proof that this tight governmental control was effective was the dismissal of the first High Commissioner, Lieutenant General Alfau only four months after taking office for “not having understood the spirit of the protectorate.”⁸⁹ This political interference contrasted sharply with the freedom of action that Lyautey enjoyed on the French side.⁹⁰

Most of the books written in English depict the Spanish Army eager to intervene in Africa to repair their honour and to look for a job. However, the increasing attention to Morocco since 1904 did not result in any augmentation of the forces in Africa. The first augmentation took place in 1909, only after the incidents in the railway. Even so, once the situation was considered calm, most of the reinforcements redeployed back to the Peninsula. While the actual implementation of the French-Spanish agreement in 1913 may have suggested an increment in military presence in Morocco, no more forces were deployed.⁹¹ These facts deny the argument

⁸⁷ Villanova, *El Protectorado*, 122-123.

⁸⁸ BOZIM n° 2, 115-118. Instructions from the Ministry of War to the High Commissioner dated April 24, 1913, articles 2, 6 and 8.

⁸⁹ Pando, *Historia Secreta*, 66. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 43. And for the intervention, the famous Jordana letter.

⁹⁰ Ayache, *Les Origines*, 89.

⁹¹ Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, I-568, 565. While the garrison in Melilla was far bigger than in 1909, in fact the garrison had been diminished as the operations in summer 1912 did not required the troops.

that the army as an institution was searching for a new combat theater. In fact, in 1912 there were very few officers permanently posted in Morocco.⁹² It may well have happened that the campaigns in Morocco contributed to increase the intervention of the Army in politics in Spain, but this phenomenon followed the facts that this monograph studies and must not interfere in the appraisal of the performance of the Army as has happened much too often.⁹³ Moreover, the impact of the operations in Africa had a profound negative effect inside the Army. The economic situation of the professional army in Spain was terrible, and the only way to compensate those serving in Morocco was through higher pay, commendations and promotions from war merits. If there had been a general eagerness of the military for warlike adventures, most of them had volunteered to serve in Africa.⁹⁴ However, that was not the case and the officers in the peninsula complained about the privileges of the *Africanistas* by creating *Juntas de Defensa* in 1916 and putting the government and the Army in a very delicate situation.⁹⁵ Perhaps the most conspicuous case of a military officer opposing the involvement in Morocco was General Primo de Rivera, a declared “*abandonista*” (supporter of the abandonment of Morocco) under whose command finally the Alhucemas landing was executed and the military campaigns ended.⁹⁶

⁹² Cardona, *El Problema Militar*, 128. The author provides data of the Infantry Officers posted in Morocco in 1912: 14 out of 237 Colonels, 51 out of 518 Lieutenant Colonels and 72 out of 1,063 Majors. Francisco Saro Gandarillas, “Cuando los Militares Pugnaban por ir a Marruecos”, <http://franciscosarogandarillas.blogspot.com/2010/02/cuando-los-militares-pugnaban-por-ir.html> (accessed February 15, 2011). The author questions the topic of the desire of the Officer Corps to serve in Morocco and provides statistics that show how most of the officers did not volunteer to serve there and most of those finally posted were the ones with the lower order of precedence within their rank.

⁹³ Cardona, *El Problema Militar*, 126.

⁹⁴ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 50. Payne, *Politics*, 126.

⁹⁵ Payne, *Politics*, 123-151. The Military Defense Juntas or *Juntas de Defensa* in Spanish was an corporative association movement inside the Spanish Army designed to review the different system of salary, commendations and promotions between the Officers in Africa and those in the Peninsula and between officers from different Branches. The movement challenged openly the government and caused several changes of cabinets and a profound internal division in the Army. The outburst of the movement in 1917 coincided with the first general strike in the history of Spain. The *Juntas* were completely dissolved in 1922.

⁹⁶ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 14. In the prologue to the book, Lieutenant General Luque, minister of Defense in several cabinets, remarks this paradox. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 93.

The *Juntas de Defensa* were but another manifestation of the acute unstable Spanish society in the first quarter of 20th century which is in turn another source for the misinterpretation of the military performance in Morocco.⁹⁷ For the army was at the time also the guarantor of the public order and as such was the target of the attacks of the growing social, labour and nationalist movements. In particular, the army was the most direct source of support for the King and the hardest to overcome and therefore any setback in Morocco was used as an excuse to promote this anti army and anti-system campaign.⁹⁸ In addition, this political pressure –added to the unfair draft system– provoked the popular rejection of the Moroccan project which reinforced the government’s tendency for low commitment thus creating a vicious circle of no improvement in the Protectorate, popular discontent and lack of governmental commitment. Trapped in this circle, the conflict in Morocco dragged until it was too late to establish a peaceful protectorate by other means than the military.

Effectively, by 1919 the prospect of a German sponsored change in the region had vanished. In the *Yebala* el Raisuni had managed to establish himself as a powerful warlord and in the Rif the so far loose resistance of the individual tribes was getting organized around Abd el Krim. When Abd el Krim definitively abandoned Melilla in 1918, he was convinced that there was no possibility for agreement with the Spanish and his dreams of a modern and European like Rif would have to be built without external support.⁹⁹ Even prior to Annual, his main effort was

⁹⁷ See Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 9-10 for some of the tensions between military and civilian society at that time. For more details see Payne, *Politics*, 83-101.

⁹⁸ Rafael Núñez Florencio, *Militarismo y Antimilitarismo en España (1888-1906)* (Madrid, Spain: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1990), 128, 194. Núñez describes how, at the end of the 19th century the republican parties would use any argument available against the Monarchy and how the army was attacked because of its role as a repressive instrument of the bourgeois state. Eloy Martin Corrales, *Marruecos y el Colonialismo Español (1859-1912): de la Guerra de Africa a la Penetración Pacífica* (Barcelona, Spain: Bellaterra, 2002), 207. Martin Corrales highlights how the opposition to the intervention in Morocco of the Catalan nationalist parties was motivated more by their hostility against the central state than by anti-colonialism.

⁹⁹ Pennell, *A Country*, 234. Usborne, *The Conquest*, 264. Usborne quotes Lyautey’s view point about the external influences on Abd el Krim.

to form a regular army, organized, and equipped in a modern European style and the success achieved after the disaster led him to opt for a military policy, not only to combat the Spanish, but also to reinforce his dominance over the other tribes.¹⁰⁰ To put it in contemporary terms, he deliberately chose to pass to Phase III of the “Mao’s Theory of Protracted War.”¹⁰¹ If the Spanish Army had been the only responsible for the supposed militarization of the Protectorate, maybe Abd el Krim could have found a different approach towards France in the south in whose Protectorate the “peaceful penetration” and the “oil drop” policies have been traditionally (and fairly) praised and contrasted with the Spanish militaristic approach.¹⁰² Instead, Abd el Krim also reacted militarily and launched against the French, not a guerrilla or an irregular campaign, but a regular and methodical frontal attack that wiped out a good portion of the French advanced line.¹⁰³ This deliberate attack to the French zone was the trigger for the final French-Spanish offensive. In the same way that the daring advance of General Silvestre in 1921 caused the tribes to unite under the leadership of Abd el Krim, the bold attack of the latter on the French provoked the effective alliance of France and Spain, which inexplicably had not happened after 13 years of supposed joint Protectorate. Abd el Krim may have learnt “the very methods of penetration which

¹⁰⁰ Penell, *A Country*, 74. As soon as May 1921 Abd el Krim had started to pay people to join a force similar to the Spanish Native Police and had appointed his first field commander. Simultaneously, he proposed to replace the traditional fine by execution in cases of murdering. Ayache, *Les Origines*, 315. Ayache dates back to February the creation of the first armed force and stresses how important was for Abd el Krim to have “true soldiers, educated, well trained and always at hand” as a political instrument to establish himself as the leader of a central Rifian power.

¹⁰¹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 1-7. Ayache, *Les Origines*, 14-15. Maybe this resemblance of Mao’s strategy is what has moved Ayache to consider, based only in “few precise indications”, that Abd el Krim was one inspiring figure for Mao and Ho Chi Minh. Daoud, *Abdelkrim*, 16. Daoud also contributes to this dubious thesis but without providing more indications.

¹⁰² Gregoire Potiron de Boisfleury, “The Origins of Marshal Lyautey’s Pacification Doctrine in Morocco from 1912 to 1925” (MMAS Thesis. U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2010), http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p4013coll2&CISOPTR=2666 &CISOBX=1&REC=15 (accessed August, 5 2010), 56-61. See this passage for a brief explanation of the basics of the “oil stain” policy.

¹⁰³ Usborne, *The Conquest*, 269-270.

Lyautey had invented”, but the oil he chose to drop was mineral oil from war machinery instead of olive oil.¹⁰⁴

This section has showed how the inability of the government to devise and fund an appropriate national strategy left the armed forces as the state’s only effective instrument to establish the Protectorate. A gradual reliance on military operations, together with slow and costly advances and social instability in Spain increased the Army’s involvement in politics that became thereafter one of the patterns to assess negatively his performance during the campaigns. The insights provided about the tight governmental control on the military leadership, the importance of the anti-Army movement in shaping public opinion, the internal division in the military regarding Morocco and Abd el Krim’s strategy to fight Spain and France with regular military operations should help to approach the performance of the Army from a more open minded perspective.

Stability Operations

When analyzing the military performance of the Spanish Armed Forces, scholars usually center in combat operations, but the reality is that the Spanish forces were perfectly aware that theirs was not a mission that could be achieved only by offensive and defensive operations. As a matter of fact, they developed what today would be called Full Spectrum Operations. This section deals with some of the stability operations expressed in current terms.¹⁰⁵ Once the pacification was achieved in 1927 the military fostered these stability operations as administrators of the Protectorate until 1956 but these activities remain mostly unnoticed because most of the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 264

¹⁰⁵ Headquarters Department of the Army *FM 3-07, Stability Operations*. (Washington D.C., USA, 2008), 2-1 – 2-12

bibliography in English centers in the previous periods.¹⁰⁶ This lack of attention to the whole duration of the Protectorate has also contributed to the incomplete appreciation of the performance of the Army in Morocco.

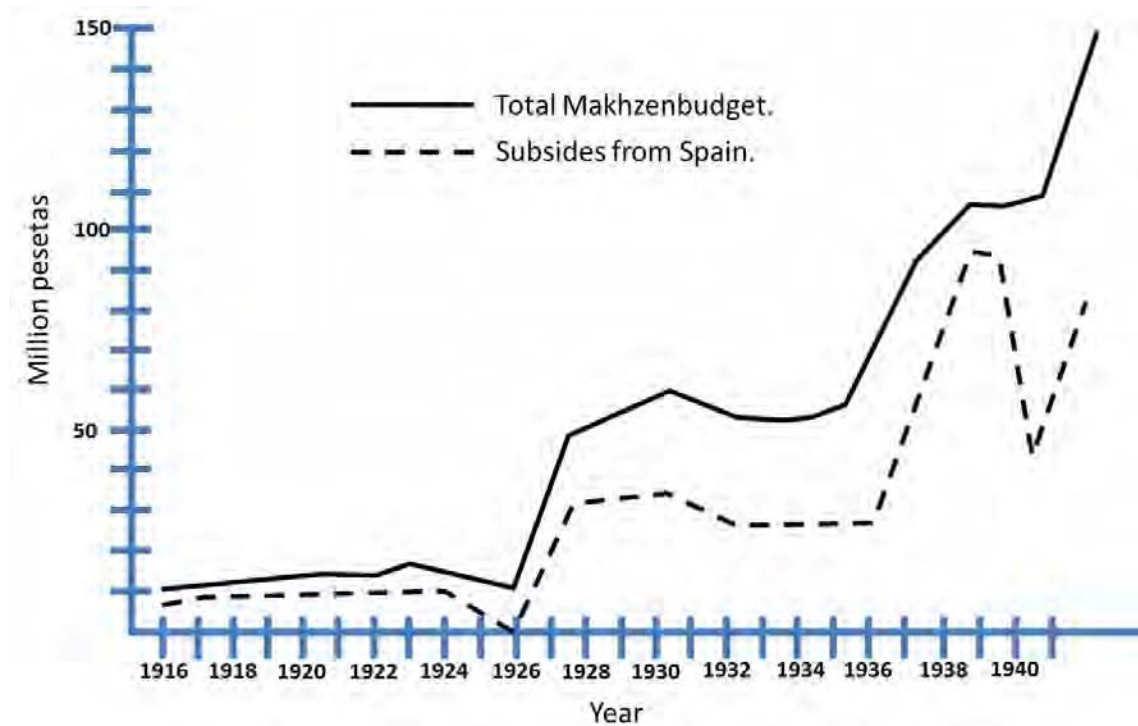


Figure 5. Makhzen Budgets 1916-1940 and part subsidized by Spain. Source: Aziza, *La Sociedad*, 89.

Cultural Awareness

The intervention of Spain in Morocco has been hardly criticized for the great ignorance of the country, which is a fair criticism because Morocco, and in particular the northern area, was almost unknown to the world, including the Spanish. However, the majority of books that had been written about Morocco at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th were authored by Army Officers who claimed the need to understand Morocco and be aware of the real

¹⁰⁶ Figure 5 shows the big difference between the Makhzen budget before and after 1926. The graphic shows clearly the importance of subsidies from Spain, mostly before 1928. Data obtained from Aziza, *La Sociedad*, 89.

magnitude of the interaction that sooner or later (depending on when the book was written) was to happen.¹⁰⁷ Interest to know and understand the country and the culture never stopped and the Bulletin for the Zone of the Influence, in addition to the legal dispositions, published frequently articles about geography, customs or economy.¹⁰⁸ The *Revista de Tropas Coloniales*, a publication that usually is cited negatively as the expression organ of the *Africanistas*, dedicated a great part of its content to the diffusion of local culture.¹⁰⁹ Cartography is another field in which information was lacking, and again, the limited knowledge was due to the anticipation of some audacious Officers.¹¹⁰ The need to deal with the Moroccans was very soon appreciated by the military and the importance of learning Arabic was clearly understood; as soon as 1904 the Army founded Arabic schools in Ceuta and Melilla.¹¹¹ The Commanders were conscious that one of the main obstacles that prevented the locals from accepting the presence of the Spanish was the religious difference between the two countries and consequently they enforced religious tolerance and mutual respect.¹¹² While literature has created the impression of an overall disdain of the

¹⁰⁷ María Dolors García Ramón and Joan Nogué Font, “La Experiencia Colonial Española en Marruecos y las Monografías Regionales (1876-1956)”, *Anales de Geografía de la Universidad Complutense*, no 15 (1995): 338. <http://revistas.ucm.es/ghi/02119803/articulos/AGUC9595220335A.PDF> (accessed September 16, 2009). Seventeen out of the twenty four monographs selected in the article were written by military. See some comments about the need to know the real situation in Morocco before any further involvement of Spain in Gerónimo Campo Angulo, *Geografía de Marruecos* (Madrid, Spain: Imprenta de la Sección de Hidrografía, 1908), 259 and Cañizares, *Apuntes*, 215.

¹⁰⁸ BOZIM no. 21, 100-136. This issue, published in February 1914 contains the first part of a series of articles about the Anyera *cabila* in the Yebala.

¹⁰⁹ *Revista de Tropas Coloniales* no. 4. This issue contains, for instance, one article dedicated to the employment of statistical calculations to control the development of cattle raising, another about economic hegemony in the Straits of Gibraltar, and the usual book review section.

¹¹⁰ Luis Urteaga, Francesc Nadal and José Ignacio Muro, “Imperialismo y Cartografía: La Organización de la Comisión Española de Estado Mayor en Marruecos (1881-1882)”, *Scripta Nova* Vol. VII, no 142 (June 2003). <http://www.ub.es/geocrit/sn/sn-142.htm> (accessed December 7, 2009).

¹¹¹ Jerónimo García Fernández, “Primeras Academias de Árabe en Ceuta y Melilla”, *Revista Ejército*, no 573 (Oct 1987): 17-20. Two academies were founded in 1904 in Ceuta and 1905 in Melilla. General Silvestre, supposedly one of the more militarist commanders, graduated in 1908 after three years of study and one of his examiners was Mohamed Abd-el-Krim.

¹¹² Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 14. The practice initiated by General Marina to signal the beginning and the end of fast during Ramadan with cannon fire was still in force in 1913. Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, III-579. In the midst of the offensive of 1921 General Silvestre spent 3.000 *pesetas* in repairing

Spanish military for Morocco and their people, in reality the leadership was culturally very well adapted to the environment they were operating in.¹¹³ Some examples show how these skills were employed to avoid combat operations.

Colonel Gabriel Morales, Chief of the Native Police in Melilla for many years, was a perfect example of the integration of a military officer into Riffian society and his negotiations made possible the peaceful expansion of Spanish presence in the Melilla area.¹¹⁴ In September 1909, by then Colonel Francisco Larrea, with 800 men and one auxiliary *harka* of natives traveled through the territory of Quebdana for seven days and by negotiating with the different leaders managed to obtain their cooperation.¹¹⁵ In 1920, Lieutenant Colonel Castro Girona, another good officer knowledgeable of the territory, entered alone into the town of *Xauen* disguised as a charcoal-burner and convinced the town elders to surrender to the “supposedly” overwhelming forces that were surrounding the town.¹¹⁶

Essential Services

While North Morocco was a very poor area it was capable to feed the population when crops were normal. However, dry years or any other adverse condition could provoke famines in

and protecting with fences the tomb of one local *marabout* or saint. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 11. The lessons from the 1893-94 combats, provoked by the demolition of a similar sanctuary, had been learnt.

¹¹³ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 14, 44, 46, 61, 66. General Marina, General Aizpuru and Colonel Castro Girona are recognized as “enlightened arabist(s).” Even General Silvestre, who is commonly considered as the archetype of the militarist faction is recognized to have concern for the Moroccans and to understand perfectly the value of “investment and public works.”

¹¹⁴ Pando, *Historia Secreta*, 22-23. Colonel Gabriel Morales Mendigutia was born in Cuba, where he fought against the Cuban insurgents. Since 1899 he was posted in Melilla. He spoke English, French, Arabic and Chelja, the local dialect, and was member of the Royal Academy of History. He was killed in combat during the retreat from Annual in July 1921 and his body was returned by Abd el Krim to the Spanish authorities some days after his death as a symbol of respect. *Ibid.*, 184-185.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 84. Francisco Larrea Liso achieved the rank of Major General and was appointed as Commanding General in Ceuta in 1914, but unfortunately he died just one day after taking office.

¹¹⁶ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 61. The forces surrounding the city were not as powerful as the Colonel fancied and, in fact, Xauen remained almost besieged by the troops of Raisuni for some time. Castro reached the rank of Lieutenant General in 1930. Pando, *Historia Secreta*, 323.

the area. This is why agricultural projects were developed as soon as 1913 and when seasonal food shortages happened, the Spanish commanders ordered distribution of food or requested fund to Madrid if they lack them to alleviate the suffering of the population.¹¹⁷ Agricultural development is closely tied to land property, and in Morocco at that time, property was related to religious beliefs. While the appreciation of how respectful of the traditional forms of property the Spanish authorities were depend very much on the source, it is possible to affirm that the Protectorate did not imply the expoliation of the locals for the benefit of Spanish colonists or companies.¹¹⁸

The Decree that established the Protectorate considered health care as one of the most effective ways to demonstrate the preoccupation of the Spanish for the Moroccans and gain their acceptance and thus one of the tasks of the department of Native Affairs was the establishment of medical services.¹¹⁹ However, as in many other areas, the only provider of health care in the area, even if it was insufficient, turned to be the Army Medical Corps. In fact, except in the cities where some dispensaries existed, the Medical Corps was for a long time the only provider in the rural areas. In 1919 the Native Police doctors were the pioneers to extend this service to the local populace.¹²⁰ Doctors and nurses were part of the patrols that visited *zocos* and offered their

¹¹⁷ Aziza, *La Sociedad*, 76. The author explains some agricultural projects. See also Gómez Jordana, *La Tramoya*, 25 for the promotion of local crops and low rate loans for seeds and Pando, *Historia Secreta*, 95 for the urgent request of General Silvestre to the Government for funds to distribute grain to the tribes in 1921.

¹¹⁸ Aziza, *La Sociedad*, 72-83. This modern work is very critical with the Spanish colonization. Víctor Ruiz Albéniz, *Colonización Española en Marruecos* (Madrid, Spain: Imprenta Saez Hermanos, 1930), 137-157. According to this book local population welcomed the agricultural improvements. The book explains all regulations designed to assure the rights about land property.

¹¹⁹ BOZIM n° 1, 55.

¹²⁰ Luis Alfonso Arcarazo García, “El Cuerpo de Sanidad Militar en las Campañas de Marruecos (1919-1927) (Principales Innovaciones Legislativas en Este Periodo)”, *Revista de Historia Militar* no 93 (June 2003): 190.

services to the locals.¹²¹ Health care was not limited to sick care or wounds healing; the sanitary action was soon extended to improve hygiene and particularly to endemic illnesses like paludism.¹²² Most of the civilian services provided, including health care, were not developed until the 40s and thus remain unnoticed.

Economy and Infrastructure

The Spanish authorities understood also the relationship between economic development and stability in the area. The first intervention of the Army in 1905 was in fact aimed to defend the commercial interests of Spain face to French trade companies that were attempting to establish factories in the area of Spanish influence.¹²³ Incidents multiplied in 1909, this time for mining interest that hid an underlying competence to make Melilla the point of attraction of the commerce of western Algeria or to canalize it to the axis Oujda – Taza – Fez in benefit of France.¹²⁴ Due to the characteristics of the Spanish zone, the two main areas of immediate economic development were trade and mining, but for economy to grow, security and infrastructure were required. Thus, in an effort to improve economic conditions, the Spanish carried out infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, railways and telephone lines.¹²⁵ Unfortunately, lack of funding forced the Spanish Army to carry out some of those projects employing military units instead of contracting civilian labor and this limited the positive impact

¹²¹ Vial de Morla, *España en Marruecos. (La Obra Social)* (Madrid, Spain: Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1947), 46-47. Vial de Morla was a pseudonym used by Tomás García Figueras.

¹²² Ruiz, *Colonización Española*: 233-234.

¹²³ Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, II-11.

¹²⁴ See La Porte, *La Atracción*, 45. Pastor, *España y la Apertura*, 244 for the competition between Spain and France regarding the commerce in the border of Morocco and Algeria as soon as 1896.

¹²⁵ Gómez Jordana, *La Tramoya*, 26-28. Before 1908 there were no paved roads in the territory. Only during the time Gómez Jordana was High Commissioner 210 kilometres of paved roads and 626 of unpaved tracks were built. In addition, Ceuta and Tetouan were connected by railway and in Melilla 80 Km of railway were built in the area of Melilla.

on the local population.¹²⁶ Military considerations and the rough terrain were the major incentives for the construction of a road network design and Melilla and Tetuan were linked by a proper road only in 1933.¹²⁷

The Army has been traditionally accused of having just paved the road for the benefit of economic groups and having forgotten about the welfare of the population. This argument has several flaws. First, Morocco was not the “*el dorado*” that many authors have presented and private companies were more than reluctant to invest in Morocco.¹²⁸ Second, the budget allocated for public works and economic development was really low until the territory was not pacified.¹²⁹ And finally, the Moroccans were not foreign at all to the prospective of economic development; Bu-Hamara, el Raisuni and the very same Abd el Krim –the leader with the most solid political program– cooperated and fomented the intervention of European investors and made themselves considerable profit of such relations.¹³⁰

One last aspect the military also understood was the relationship of economic dynamics and military operations. For instance, military planners programmed operations in the periods when most of the local men were busy in crop recollection either locally or even better in Algeria.¹³¹ Economic pressure was employed sometimes to achieve political and military objectives and occasionally crops were burned.¹³² However, the economic distress imposed by the

¹²⁶ Pando, *Historia Secreta*, 96-97. General Silvestre was conscious of the importance of employing locals and in February 1921 requested the money for employing 500 workers to build several roads, but the money was not approved.

¹²⁷ Abet, “La Ordenación del Territorio”, 346.

¹²⁸ Aziza, *La Sociedad*, 71.

¹²⁹ See figure 5 in previous pages.

¹³⁰ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 15, 35, 47. El Roghi sold mining concessions to French and Spanish companies. El Raisuni was in secret dealings with German companies. Abd el Krim father and sons benefited also from selling rights to European companies.

¹³¹ Pando, *Historia Secreta*, 38-39.

¹³² Pennell, *A Country*, 65, 166. The criticism to the Spanish for cutting trade from Alhucemas Island with the natives in Ajdir in 1919 contrast with the aseptic treatment of the destruction of houses and

military to the population was nothing comparable to the concentration camps or “scorched earth” policies practiced in Cuba by General Weyler in the late 19th, by Roberts and Kitchener in the second Boer war or by Gen Franklin in Philippines at the beginning of the 20th.¹³³

Civil Control

During the brief periods in which the *Makhzen* held sway of Northern Morocco, the only instruments of control that was able to establish were taxation and justice. Taxation was most of the times subject to great arbitrariness, since usually the officials he appointed, the *caids*, bought the charge from the Sultan in exchange for liberty to collect the taxes.¹³⁴ Spain did not change the taxation system but perfected it avoiding the proverbial abuses committed by previous native officials.¹³⁵ The taxes raised in Morocco were spent in Morocco and since that was not enough, Spain dedicated since 1913 one chapter of her budget to fill the gap.¹³⁶

Justice in the Zone of Influence was a mix between the Arab system based on the Sharia law and the customary Berber laws or *urf*.¹³⁷ The Arabic system relied on judges called *Cadís*, appointed by the Sultan at the *cabila* level and the Berber was administered by assemblies of representatives of the families and clans. The means to enforce justice varied also depending on the degree of Arabization; corporal punishment and prison were more frequent on the Jebala whereas in the Rif, no prisons existed and justice was enforced either by blood feud or by

burning of crops in the Guelaya tribe ordered by Abd el Krim in summer 1924. The French-Spanish embargo in 1925 exacerbated internal divisions in the Rifi party. Ibid., 198.

¹³³ Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, 118, 131-132, 148. As already noted in the introduction, Asprey's treatment of the Moroccan Campaigns is really weak, so probably the same is applicable to these other conflicts. However it is a practical source that compares several cases in a single book.

¹³⁴ Villanova, *El Protectorado*, 27.

¹³⁵ Woolman, *Rebels*, 51. Locals complained frequently to the Spanish for the pillage that el Raisuni committed on them.

¹³⁶ See figure 4 in previous pages.

¹³⁷ Pennell, *A Country*, 28.

economic fines.¹³⁸ The Spanish basically maintained the traditional justice system and the most conspicuous proof was that Abd el Krim held an important post in the judicial system.¹³⁹ Under the overall policy of preventing the tribes to unite against them, the Spanish attempted to break the fines system to create internal quarrels inside the tribes. It is important to say that whereas the Spanish are criticized for having attempted to distort the traditional Berber system, Abd el Krim is praised as a reformer for having done the same but to a much greater extent; he ended the fines system, he establish the death penalty –absolutely alien to the Rifi people–, imprisonment and forced works as standard punishments and, what is even more contrary to Berber custom, he intervened in the nomination of justice administrators an tribes representatives. But, as with many other aspects, literature has captured mostly the negative points of the Spanish action while the full implementation of the justice policy of Spain has remained mostly unnoticed because it happened once the pacification was achieved. Spain managed to respect quite well the traditional system and to make compatible the Beber traditions with the Arabized system represented by the *Makhzen*. Thus every *cabila* would have a *cadí* in charge of general issues and major crimes and the clans and family would continue to be administered by their local leaders and assemblies; the Officer of the *Cuerpo de Intervención* would watch against corruption and malfunction of the system but as a general rule would not intervene in the verdicts unless they affected political issues.¹⁴⁰ This policy of integrating Berber and Arab systems contrasts sharply with the very much discussed French policy of an exclusive statute for Berbers.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ibid., 27. In fact the fines system seems to have been developed to avoid feuds.

¹³⁹ Ramón Sánchez Díaz, “Retrato Biográfico de Abd el Krim”, *Revista de Historia Militar* no 60 (January-June 1986): 135. Abd el Krim was judge of appeals.

¹⁴⁰ Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, “El Interventor y el Caíd. La Política Colonial Española Frente a la Justicia Marroquí Durante el Protectorado de Marruecos (1912-1956)”, *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia*, vol. LXVII, no 226 (May-August, 2007): 645. <http://hispania.revistas.csic.es/index.php/hispania/article/view/56/56> (accessed October 5, 2010).

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 648. Shinar, Pessah. 2006. "A Major Link between France's Berber Policy in Morocco and its "Policy of Races" in French West Africa: Commandant Paul Marty (1882-1938)." *Islamic Law &*

Ultimately the military were perfectly aware of their weak combat capabilities and therefore they preferred any peaceful agreement to combat, and moreover, they were intimately convinced that the only way to sustain the Protectorate was by helping the locals to take care of themselves because there was not enough manpower and money to build a parallel governmental structure or a police force to patrol the whole territory. These shortfalls originated two important traits of the action of the military leaders for their approach to the locals: 1) a permanent effort to keep dialogue with the tribes, regardless of their acceptance or not of the *Khalifa*, and 2) the need for reconciliation with the hostile factions.

Well before the protectorate, several European nations, Spain among them, had locals working for their interest in exchange for a monetary reward.¹⁴² That continued to be the preferred method of the Spanish to influence the local tribes. Later on the Native Police, through the “*Oficinas de Asuntos Indígenas*”, was in charge of gathering information and preparing further advances in native territory by conversations and agreements with the local leaders. Spanish called those procedures “*acción política*”, and thus, for instance the Operations Plans submitted in 1921 by General Silvestre to the High Commissioner was called “*Plan Político Militar*” or Political-Military Plan, in which military actions were planned according to the expected results of the agreements with the local chiefs.¹⁴³ Spain developed a good network of

Society, vol. 13, no. 1 (January, 2006): 35. <http://web.ebscohost.com/lumen.cgscarl.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?hid=10&sid=9c58557d-f94e-4345-a9a9-bca48fc6fa69%40sessionmgr10&vid=6> (accessed February 5, 2011). The famous “Berber Dahir” of 1930 established exclusive tribunals for Berber tribes, removed sharia law for Berbers, and subtracted serious crimes from the Sultan’s jurisdiction by transferring them to the French tribunals.

¹⁴² Jerónimo Becker, *España y Marruecos. Sus Relaciones Diplomáticas durante el Siglo XIX* (Madrid, Spain: Tipolitografía Raoul Péant, 1903), 204. The issue of the protected personnel was one more dividing the International community. Those people were not subject to the jurisdiction of the Sultan but to that of the protecting nation. In the Madrid Conference of 1880, Spain and Britain tried unsuccessfully to reinforce the role of the Sultan.

¹⁴³ Servico Histórico Militar, *Historia*, III-625-629.

local confidants and also counted on intermediaries to negotiate when the “official” contact was broken or not yet achieved.¹⁴⁴

The absence of Spanish local authorities implied that chiefs of tribes that had opposed or even had fought against Spain held important posts in the tribal hierarchy once the tribe had given allegiance to the *Khalifa*. Two examples demonstrate this attitude:

Colonel Goded, Chief of Staff of the *Comandancia Militar* of Melilla in 1925 and commander of one of the columns that disembarked in *Alhucemas* in September 1925 described what he saw as Spanish troops conducted an assault on an enemy position as follow:

a *caid*, a tall and hefty old man wearing a long white beard, standing without cover or seeking protection at all, that with a huge baton encouraged the troop and stopped to hit those who vacillated. Impressed by the gallantry of that old man, I suggested to Varela and the officers of the *harca* before they launched the assault that they should try to capture that valiant Chief alive, with the intent of making him *caid* of our *harca* that same day.¹⁴⁵

Unfortunately, the *caid* did not survive the assault, but the following report corroborates that General Goded’s intent was not at all unlikely. To reduce attrition to European forces in the *Yebala* region during winter 1926 the High Commissioner decided to organize one native *harka*. His plan had a double purpose because he also wanted to achieve a moral effect by employing natives from the tribes which had recently submitted after having fought harshly against the Spanish. Major López Bravo, from the *Cuerpo de Intervencion* in Tetuan was appointed Commander of the *harka*. He relied only on two European subordinates, one Captain and one Sergeant; the remaining cadres were natives who had been Officers in Abd el Krim’s army. The highest ranking among those Officers had been one of the last to surrender to the Spanish, as late as June 1926. This officer would act as second in command. The idea of rearming previous enemies raised some criticism against the High Commissioner, but he remained firm in his

¹⁴⁴ Pennell, *A Country*, 196.

¹⁴⁵ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 224-225.

decision, conscious of the psychological effects that such a unit would have among the native population. With a total permanent strength of 1,500, more than 3,000 men served in this *harka* for the period of almost one year in which the unit was in service. Significantly, only two soldiers deserted. Even more significantly, the *harka*'s second command became an Officer in the Spanish native forces at the end of the campaigns.¹⁴⁶

Both examples vividly illustrate how likely and feasible it was for the Spanish Army to accept and integrate previous foes. At the end of military operations in 1927 Goded himself clearly advocated the need for “not merely paying lip-service but for a truly felt and practiced” reconciliation, not only between Spanish and Africans, but also among the different tribes that had suffered violent clashes among themselves. This was going to be one of the main tasks of the *Cuerpo de Intervención*.¹⁴⁷

Governance

The basic tenet of the Spanish governance policy in Morocco was to reinforce the authority of the Sultan, and the way to achieve it was to create a parallel structure of supervision or “*intervención*” with Spanish Officials. For the government the objective was twofold: first of all, save money and second, have a tight control on the local government.¹⁴⁸ However, the real beauty of the system was that it accepted the customs and rules of the locals causing very little disruption in their power structures and daily life. As tight as the control could have been, it was much less unsettling than the establishment of one Spanish –and as such Christian– administration could have been.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 353-356.

¹⁴⁷ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 447-448.

¹⁴⁸ BOZIM n° 1, 86. In a parliamentary speech, the Secretary of State, Mr. García Prieto, discussed the control that the Spanish Government exerted over the “Khalifa.”



Figure 6. *Interventores* dealing with caids of the Beni Urriaguel tribe. Source: Vicente Moga Romero, *El Rif de Emilio Blanco Izaga: Trayectoria Militar, Arquitectónica y Etnográfica en el Protectorado de España en Marruecos*. (Melilla, Spain: UNED-Melilla, 2009), 273

The *intervención* was to be exerted by the already existing civilian officials in the cities, and in the country by the military unit commanders as their presence was expanding. The first points of presence of Spanish authorities outside the Spanish cities were the "*Oficinas de Asuntos Indígenas*" or "Native Affairs Offices" which were manned by the Native Police and performed mainly information tasks. Local chiefs continued to exercise authority over the faction or tribe once they had pledged their allegiance to the *Khalifa* but under close supervision of the military commander in the area. Before 1925 the permanent deployment of Army troops was limited to small outposts in strategic points but the tribes were not disarmed, sometimes because they were helping the Spanish to continue the expansion and sometimes because their security was so precarious that they need them for auto defense; a very loose control indeed.

This was the model in the surroundings of Melilla where once Bu Hamara was defeated by the Beni Urriaguel, the area fell into complete anarchy.¹⁴⁹ Thus negotiations had to be conducted almost with every tribal faction. Only those tribes located close to the city were favorable to the Spanish from the beginning since they were the more clearly favored by the

¹⁴⁹ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 17.

commerce with Melilla and the perspective of being under the protection of the *Makhzen* imposed by Spain was better than being submitted to Bu Hamara or other tribes.¹⁵⁰

In the western area el Raisuni was in theory an Official of the Sultan, so when he offered his cooperation to the Spanish authorities, they initially accepted him as his main collaborator. El Raisuni also came from a distinguished religious lineage; hence he was a good candidate for *Khalifa*.¹⁵¹ Notwithstanding, his background as a brigand and the difficulty to control him that for sure the Spanish considered, made him unsuitable for the post and a far relative of the Sultan, Muley el Mehdi was selected instead. If el Raisuni had not been fully respectful of the legitimate Sultan he would be even less inclined to submit to a person he personally despised so by 1913 he broke his relations with the Spanish and those were forced, once again, to deal with several local chieftains separately.¹⁵² These new circumstances were as unstable as in the eastern area, and the Spanish accepted to pact again with el Raisuni in 1915 despite the fact that he did not recognize the authority of the *Khalifa* and the High Commissioner was reluctant to this alliance.

The government in Madrid was confident that the benefits Spain was to introduce would convince the locals to accept naturally the Spanish sponsored *Khalifa* and that it was a question of time to attract the locals. That was not just voluntarism; Bu Hamara, el Raisuni and the Abd el Krim family, convinced that the weakness of the Sultan had made the intervention of Europeans in Morocco unavoidable, supported the Spanish protectorate –that of the weakest nation–. At a given moment, they all thought that Spain would help them to achieve their political and economic ambitions.¹⁵³ But this governmental rationale was very weak. First of all the Moroccan

¹⁵⁰ Víctor Ruiz Albéniz, *Las Responsabilidades del Desastre. Ecce Homo. Prueba Documental y Aportes Inéditos sobre las Causas del Derrumbamiento y Consecuencias de Él* (Madrid, Spain: Biblioteca Nueva, 1923), 29. The tribe of Quebdana supported the Spanish presence as soon as 1909 and remained friendly even during the Annual defeat.

¹⁵¹ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 35.

¹⁵² Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 37.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 15, 34, 47.

perceived the Spanish as their traditional enemies, invaders and infidels, and this perception was very difficult to change on tribes that were used to live independently, even if the pensioned collaborators had been able to influence the tribes more than they actually did. Second, due to economic limitations and the infancy of the colonial administration, very little of the Spanish presence was noticeable other than troops. Third, the military deployment was very frail; it consisted on several small detachments, under very poor logistical conditions, that were unable to provide the peaceful environment that the real agitation of the area required.

The military had another viewpoint. General Gómez Jordana, High Commissioner from 1915 to 1918, resumed his understanding of the policy in the protectorate in the metaphor of a surgical operation. For him force should have been employed as “a very limited surgical intervention” and then “heal the injury up with schools, medical facilities and so on.”¹⁵⁴ However, a fraction, normally in the junior ranks, did not share a commitment to try a political and peaceful approach and lacked the knowledge and negotiating abilities required for peaceful resolution.¹⁵⁵

After many years of service in Africa, General Jordana knew that there was a portion of population who remained irreconcilable enemies of the Spanish presence in Morocco, and of the authority of the *Khalifa* they protected. This group would have never accepted any compromise or bowed to peaceful overtures; for these only the use of force was an option, and the army was obliged to use it, the sooner, and the quickest, the better. He also knew that without a stable local government that improved the living conditions of the population peace was not possible.

¹⁵⁴ Hernández and García, *Acción de España*, 243. These expressions proceed from a speech pronounced by Lieutenant General Francisco Gómez Jordana, during the visit of the *Infante* Carlos to Tetuan in May 1918. These words would be also included in a letter that Gómez Jordana wrote in November 1918 to the Prime Minister in which he makes an excellent account of the actions, errors and future options for the Protectorate. Unfortunately, this great man died in his Office just after drafting the letter. Gómez-Jordana Sousa, *La Tramoya*, 39. The complete letter is available in Hernández and García, *La Acción de España*, 244-250.

¹⁵⁵ Pando, *Historia Secreta*, 68. General Silvestre was relieved of his Command in Larache due to the assassination of a local notable. The real culprit, a Captain, sent latter one letter to Silvestre that may reflect the mood of the junior officers.

In 1925 the *intervención* system was finally reformed and all supervision offices would hang on of one single organism depending from the High Commissioner. Supervision Offices were established in each *cabila* creating an organized network of supervision that watched for the actual control of the *Khalifa* over the pacified territory.¹⁵⁶ The figure of the *interventor*, the officer commanding the supervision office in each *cabila* constitutes the most original and efficient development of the Spanish Army to achieve governance. The *interventor* was the civil and military representative at the local level and his knowledge of the language, culture and institutions of the natives enabled him to influence the local *caids* to comply with the protectorate. The *interventor* was posted in the Office, not just temporarily deployed, and this continuity would prove fundamental to establish the necessary ties with the locals and to follow the development of projects. Finally the *interventor* was an important element to transmit the needs of the population and to introduce the social reality in the *Khalifa's* administration.¹⁵⁷ The fatigue of the population after many years of fight, higher investment by the Spanish Government and a strict policy of disarmament contributed largely to the tranquillity in the areas under Spanish control.



Figure 7. Scene of disarmament in Beni Bu Ifur Cabila 1921-1922. Source: Pando, *Historia Secreta*,

193.

¹⁵⁶ Villanova, *El Protectorado*, 166-167.

¹⁵⁷ Gabriel Villalonga Sánchez, “Aplicación de las Lecciones Aprendidas de las Oficinas de Intervenciones Militares en Marruecos a los PRT de Afganistán”, unpublished article.

The biggest hurdle for a peaceful establishment of a local government in the Spanish zone was its very premise to enforce the authority of the Sultan in the core of the *Blad es Siba*. The existence of a friendly central authority in Morocco had been the traditional aspiration of Spain in Morocco in order to avoid the problems that from time to time arose with the neighbor tribes of the Spanish possessions.¹⁵⁸ The logic was that a friendly Sultan would prioritize Spanish aspirations over the international competitors but at the same time, his authority should be strong enough to enforce those commitments upon the rebellious tribes and avoid Spanish direct involvement.¹⁵⁹ Neither the burden that this political design meant for the establishment of the Protectorate nor the huge contribution of Spain to the building of the contemporary Morocco have been properly appraised in the existing studies.

The acceptance of the authority of the *Khalifa* prevented several options for peaceful agreements that presented to Spanish at different times. First of all, the possible alliance with Bu Hamara in 1908, prior to the formal establishment of the Protectorate, was rejected because he was a contender of the legitimate Sultan.¹⁶⁰ On the west, the alliance with el Raisuni was always hampered by his repudiation of the *Khalifa* and the Sultan he represented. During World War I, the Spanish neutrality translated in Morocco in the defense of the French backed Sultan against the Turk and German sponsored opposition of Abd el Malek, Abd el Krim and el Raisuni. In 1921, when Abd el Krim became the leader of the Rif tribes, he never accepted less than absolute independence for the Rif thus making peace negotiations fruitless. Even when he was offered a wide autonomy at the negotiation table with French and Spanish in Ujda he persisted in this attitude therefore hastening his military defeat.

¹⁵⁸ Pastor, *España y la Apertura*, 88. In 1887 Spain opposed the attempts of France to divide the Moroccan Empire. See also note 139 regarding the Madrid Conference in 1880.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 131. By 1893 the policy of the Sultans was to excite the tribes and then not taking responsibility for the results. Spain on the contrary wanted to hold the Sultan responsible.

¹⁶⁰ Ruiz, *Las Responsabilidades*, 24-25.

Ayache is the main proponent of the idea that Abd el Krim was not only a Rifi leader but he represented the first Moroccan nationalist revolt against colonial dominance. As result, he denies any beneficial influence of Spain in the creation of modern Morocco. Pennell dedicates one whole chapter to discuss several interpretations of the movement led by Abd el Krim's. In it, Pennell recognizes boundaries of the "Rifi identity:" geography, culture, and the rejection of other factions.¹⁶¹ However, for Pennell the Republic of the Rif was foremost an attempt "to give practical shape to the plans for reform of four generations of Moroccan sultans and Maghribi leaders."¹⁶² If that is true, then Spain had her share in building a more united and modernized Rif that was able to integrate in the modern Morocco founded by King Mohammed V in 1958. The Spanish literature, still under the syndrome of self-blaming colonialism and very concerned with the close relation of the Protectorate to Franco's regime –a fact that is posterior to the events examined here– almost reluctantly admits any achievements of Spanish action in Morocco. Nonetheless, they existed and went much in line with the reforms that, according to Pennell, Abd el Krim fought for: a more modern and nationalistic Moroccan State, the implementation of Muslim law and religion and the creation of that "political, cultural, intellectual and social movement characterized by modernity" whose absence in the 20s Abd el Krim so badly regretted.¹⁶³

The Learning Process

One of the reasons why the Army's performance in Morocco has been traditionally criticized is the defeat of Annual, which is a fair criticism. What is not so fair is to judge the overall performance of the Spanish Army in the Protectorate only by what happened in the

¹⁶¹ Pennell, *A Country*, 235. The rejection of the *ulama* in Fez to join Abd el Krim marked "the extent of his attempt to replace the Alawi makhzan and liberate all Morocco."

¹⁶² Ibid., 238.

¹⁶³ Villanova, *El Protectorado*, 60. Pennell, *A Country*, 236.

summer of 1921. The disaster has been influential in the perception of the effectiveness of the Protectorate not only for its magnitude in terms of casualties and the setback for the Spanish operations, but also for the sociopolitical conditions of Spain at that time and for the subsequent process to assess responsibilities —otherwise known as “*Expediente Picasso*.” It is necessary to understand both circumstances to appreciate the criticisms traditionally made about the Army.

The proverbial involvement of the military in politics during the 19th century diminished with the restoration of the Bourbon Dynasty in 1874 with King *Alfonso XII* and his first Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas del Castillo.¹⁶⁴ However, the military still maintained a great influence in the internal military organization and particularly in the maintenance of public order. This role provoked a natural rejection of the military among members of the progressive parties, which were becoming more diversified and more active: socialists, communists, unions, regionalists, federalists. The Army engaged in public order missions very often and very harshly. By 1920 and 1921, the situation in Spain could be defined as a “social war.”¹⁶⁵ The defeat of Annual was another reason used by the political opposition to criticize the Army as the most direct way to attack King Alfonso XIII, who had been much more involved in military issues and in politics than his father. Thereafter, the Protectorate has been associated with this negative impression.

Politicians and Generals escaped any official blame or responsibility for the disaster at Annual because the “*Expediente Picasso*,” applied only to military responsibilities, but limited to those in the rank of colonel or below.¹⁶⁶ Many people had made mistakes, and all those were brought to light, but the root causes were never officially investigated and the harsh conclusions derived from the “*Expediente*” remained for the not very rigorous investigators as the definitive judgment on the Spanish Army. This work does not intend to question the validity of the

¹⁶⁴ Cardona, *El Problema*, 96

¹⁶⁵ Cardona, *El Problema*, 135.

¹⁶⁶ Fernando Caballero Poveda, “El Desastre de Annual (I)”, *Revista Ejército*, nº 482 (March, 1980): 55.

investigation performed by General Picasso, but considers necessary to point out the limitations that constrained it.

There is still a third factor that this monograph ventures as explanation for the deformed image of the Spanish Army provided by foreign literature. This is the international isolation of Spain at the time. First of all, the French, though theoretically partners in the Protectorate, maintained an underground disdain for the Spanish. The same was true of Great Britain, which never considered Spain an equal ally. There is no need to talk about the image of Spain in US after the relatively recent war between both countries. In addition to this, the general lack of knowledge of Spanish made sources unavailable to foreigners.

Balfour presents an overall negative impression of the Spanish army but recognizes the fact that the Spanish recovered from the disaster when he writes that the operations at the beginning of 1925:

...revealed that the colonial army had become a far more efficient fighting machine than that of the pre-disaster years. It was not only imbued with a new sense of purpose, but was also better trained and coordinated. A more effective balance had been established between the use of the professional and conscript units...The accumulation of battle experience had helped to bond the Legionnaires and native troops to their officers...The organization, supplies, and weaponry of the colonial army had also improved. Primo de Rivera had his fingers on the purse-strings and was not under the same pressure as the previous governments to placate the civilian lobby against the war.¹⁶⁷

This quotation summarizes quite well some of the main characteristics of the learning and improvement process the Spanish Armed Forces underwent during the establishment of the Protectorate and it will serve as guide for this section.

¹⁶⁷ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 104. The learning process did not start in 1925, it had been continuous since 1909. Ayache, *Les Origines*, 147 relates how the 1911 offensive of *El Mizzian* was defeated because the Spanish “had also made progress.”

A More Effective Fighting Machine than that of the Pre-Disaster Years

This section analyzes how the garrison and inexperienced Army posted in Africa in 1908 continuously transformed its tactics to become ready for the type of operations that took place in the African theater. The quotation suggests that the development of the army affected only its combat capabilities, but the army learned also to deal with stability tasks as the conflict required.

Traditionally Ceuta, Melilla, and the other small Spanish Territories in Africa were only military garrisons and prisons, so the troops that manned them were mostly disciplinary battalions charged with the custody of the prisoners and the immediate security of the walls that surrounded the cities. During the XIX century, Spain and Morocco engaged in several wars around Spanish territories, the most recent in 1893. In all those occasions, troops from the Peninsula were moved to Africa to carry out the fight.¹⁶⁸ By 1909 one third of the garrison of Melilla was dedicated to guarding all possessions and small outposts.¹⁶⁹ Soldiers were dispersed throughout the area and there was no concept of employment of the units as a whole. The attacks of July required a surge to re-establish order. Manpower for this surge was filled with men in the second reserve who had left the army several years ago and had started a normal family life. Their military value was very low and the social impact of this mobilization was extraordinary as already explained in previous sections.¹⁷⁰ The 1909 campaign provoked several changes in the Melilla garrison. First of all, the permanent garrison was augmented despite the repatriation of most of the reinforcements. Second, the *Comandancia* was transformed in a *Capitanía General* with one Division and separate Headquarters units. Third, troop deployment changed too, with the creation of new garrisons and the organization of two mobile columns.¹⁷¹ Finally, in view of the good services

¹⁶⁸ Gonzalo de Reparaz, *Política de España en África* (Barcelona, Spain: Imprenta Barcelonesa, 1907), 288.

¹⁶⁹ Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, II-43.

¹⁷⁰ Cardona, *El Problema*, 124.

¹⁷¹ Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, II-314-315.

that the Native Police had provided in the *Quebdana* region, its effectives were increased and General Larrea was appointed as Sub-director of the Native Police in Melilla.¹⁷² The final objective of these changes was to keep the current situation quiet since Spain did not have the authority to advance deeper in Morocco, to respond to the small but continuous attacks that threatened Melilla.¹⁷³

In 1911 insecurity increased in the area of Melilla while in the Atlantic the situation was degrading and France was getting close to the Spanish area. Two different tactical approaches were carried out. In Larache, Spain disembarked forces that carried out aggressive *razzias* in combination with the local forces of *el Raisuni*.¹⁷⁴ Operations in this area, accompanied by a forceful political action managed to keep the area quiet, as long as *el Raisuni* allowed.¹⁷⁵ Significant too was the employment of Marines and Navy forces in this area and the heterogeneity of the forces under Silvestre command.¹⁷⁶ In Melilla, where the violent incidents had remained relatively low, a well-known Moroccan, El Mizzian, organized and led a new revolt in 1911. As Ayache recognizes, the Spanish Army was not anymore the same inexperienced force that it had been two years before. Spanish units were able to stop El Mizzian's offensive completely when native "*Regulares*" troops killed the rebel leader.¹⁷⁷ However, the government called off military advances and operations came finally to a stop as a consequence of WW I. The Spaniards

¹⁷² Ibid., II-313. Note the promotion of Larrea to Brigadier General.

¹⁷³ At that time the agreements for the protectorate had not been signed yet.

¹⁷⁴ Barrio, *Reflexiones*, 215. "*Razzia*" was the name for a quick and violent incursion by mobile units into enemy territory. This tactic was known from the antiquity, but the French had re-discovered it during their conquest of Algeria.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 225-226.

¹⁷⁶ Martínez de Campos, *España Bélica*, 132-133. Silvestre was posted in Casablanca as chief of one Tabor of Native Police in 1911. At the beginning of 1912, already promoted as Colonel, he was commanding a force of 5000 men composed of Marines, native *Regulares*, Native Police, regular European infantry forces, and corresponding supports.

¹⁷⁷ Ayache, *Les Origines*, 147-148. Ayache remarks how the Spanish discontinued the offensive at times were the opponents were weak and the political actions carried out by the Army. Woolman, *Rebels*, 44

had already learned to defend and to apply a combination of negotiation and force, and what is more important; they had correctly identified the centre of the resistance being the Beni Urriaguel tribe. The *Comandante General* planned for landings in Alhucemas Bay in several occasions, but all of them were cancelled when they were about to be launched.¹⁷⁸ It would take a while and several thousand dead to realize that the irreducible would not be pacified by political means only.

Resumption of operations in 1919 followed the same ill-advised tactical approach than in previous years. Tactics consisted in organizing large columns to occupy small outposts during the day. Once fortified, these outposts were left under the custody of a small garrison. The problem was that most of them were very difficult to resupply. Some did not even have their own water supply. Both circumstances would be a constant source of casualties and would prove decisive in provoking the crumbling of the whole Melilla line in 1921.¹⁷⁹

The employment of one strong column, due to the limited scope of the operations had several negative tactical impacts that were clearly perceived and solved by 1925. One single column offered one perfect objective on which the enemy, mastering the rough terrain, could concentrate his otherwise inferior strength and achieve local superiority. With single columns there was no possibility for manoeuvre, so the Spanish could never attempt to turn, envelop or deceive the enemy.¹⁸⁰ General Goded proposed the “*mixed column*” as the best formation for the fight in Morocco and the Group of Regular Native Forces or “*Grupo de Fuerzas Regulares*

¹⁷⁸ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 137. Goded remarks how the plans for 1911 and 1913 were more a pacific occupation by sea than actual amphibious assaults because both counted on the support of the locals (lead by the Abd el Krim family) and required very few troops. Gómez-Jordana, *La Tramoya*, 107, 110. Gómez-Jordana mentions also the plans for 1916 and 1918. Ayache, *Les Origines*, 147. Payne, *Politics*, 112.

¹⁷⁹ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 67. Barrio, *Reflexiones*, 228-229.

¹⁸⁰ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 54-55.

Indígenas” as the best organic formation to employ such a tactic.¹⁸¹ This approach had already proved successful in the area of Larache in 1911 and General Jordana used and praised the mobile columns also in 1914 not only for offensive operations, but to assure the security of the rearguard, too.¹⁸² Goded made this proposal while he defended the idea that the principles of military science were equally applicable to that “*guerra chiquita*” or little small war.¹⁸³ The reality was that by 1925 the conflict had turned, mostly by Abd el Krim’s choice, into a conventional fight and his suggestions worked better at that time than in previous years.

In addition to improved military operations, equally important progress regarding stability in occupied areas was achieved starting in 1925. Disarmament was the first action that had not been carried out when the Protectorate started because the tribes claimed that they needed weapons for self-security; later on these arguments would not be accepted any more. Another development was an effective presence of the authority of the *Makhzen* represented by the *Interventores*.

A New Sense of Purpose

The Military had always had a clear purpose— to establish a peaceful Protectorate. In their minds, there was a level of resistance to the Spanish presence and to the Sultan’s authority that could never be overcome by peaceful means only.¹⁸⁴ The high-ranking officers had first hand

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 70-71. What Goded called mixed columns were inspired in the mobile column used by the French in Algeria and in their Moroccan zone. They consisted in self-sufficient formations of Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery. That tactic had already been considered and employed in 1911 by then Lieutenant Colonel Silvestre in Larache as the ideal formation for that environment, though its effectiveness in the northern zone was diminished by the rougher terrain and the policy of limited military engagement.

¹⁸² Fernando Caballero Poveda, “El Desastre de Annual (III).” *Revista Ejército* no 482 (March 1980): 61.

¹⁸³ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 45, 52.

¹⁸⁴ Boisfleury, *The Origins*, 21. “Military force was the key to the pacification program: this force was to be sufficient to convince the opponent of the futility of further resistance, and if required was to be capable of overcoming it.” These words of Lyautey, master of the “peaceful penetration”, showed clearly the path to the Spanish.

knowledge of the problem and were perfectly aware of the skillful application of political action and force required for setting up the Protectorate. To carry out this mission they needed political will to support the military action and money to fund the army and improve the conditions of the people. Unfortunately, none of them were available until 1925. The Army made mistakes, as the campaign of 1909 or the Annual disaster show, but their errors were not about purpose; they were about tactics, techniques, and procedures. This section examines some circumstances that prevented the steady pursuit of that clear intent.¹⁸⁵

Regarding the civilian action, the previous section has discussed in more detail the basic political challenge for the Protectorate, which was to impose the authority of the Sultan in an area that had traditionally rejected it. However, that was the international agreement that Spain had committed to and the military did its utmost to achieve it by enforcing the *Khalifa's* administration. On the area of economic development, the Spanish Zone had no possibilities to generate wealth by itself other than mining, and the effort made by the Spanish Government for material development was absolutely insufficient.¹⁸⁶ In spite of that, the High Commissioners promoted economic development according to their capabilities.¹⁸⁷

Surprisingly, the purpose of the Spanish actions seems to be less resolute regarding the intent of military operations. Ayache acknowledges how the Spanish missed the opportunity to exploit their successes in 1909, 1910, and 1912 when they repatriated forces instead of continuing operations when the opposition was weak.¹⁸⁸ In all three occasions, the Commanders received direct orders from Madrid to stop operations in order to save money and to diminish the

¹⁸⁵ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 48. Goded criticized previous High Commissioners for their pact with Rausini.

¹⁸⁶ See figures 4 and 5.

¹⁸⁷ Hernández y García, *La Acción de España*, 216, 231.

¹⁸⁸ Ayache, *Les Origines*, 143, 144, 148.

opposition that operations in Morocco were raising against the government of the moment.¹⁸⁹ The changing policy governing pacts with el Raisuni was another proof of dubious political guidance.¹⁹⁰

Better training and coordination

As already explained, the troops at Ceuta and Melilla in 1909 belonged to garrison units that were trained only for security duties, not for combat. When the first incidents happened the soldiers sent as reinforcements were even worse prepared, since they were in second reserve and went directly into combat.¹⁹¹ General Marina, *Comandante General* in Melilla, improved training with shooting exercises and frequent marches around the city as soon as 1910. General Gomez Jordana as High Commissioner continued this emphasis on training.¹⁹² However, the combat experience of Spanish troops was deficient before the Annual disaster because policy was to employ the Native Police and starting in 1911 the *Regulares* as first line units, and save the European soldiers for support and security tasks. In a report of Colonel Morales to General Silvestre about the operations to follow in 1921, the Colonel advised not to start any operation until the contingent of new recruits was properly trained.¹⁹³ The value of the training received by the European conscripts must be taken with caution due to the poor status of equipment, budget, and morale of the Spanish soldier serving in Africa. The level of preparation was far better on the side of the professional units, not only due to formal training programs, but also because of their combat experience. For instance, in preparation for the Alhucemas landing, the Brigade organized

¹⁸⁹ Hernández y García, *La Acción de España*, 246. In his famous last letter, General Jordana stressed that the repatriation of more than 20.000 soldiers in 1917 saved lots of money for the treasury.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 247. General Jordana provides a list of the instructions received from successive ministers and presidents to delay any action and keep the “*statu-quo*.”

¹⁹¹ Martínez de Campos, *España Bélica*, 78. Servicio Historico Militar, *Historia*, II-42.

¹⁹² Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, II-304. Hernández y García, *La Acción de España*, 230.

¹⁹³ Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, III-620.

in Ceuta underwent a complete training program during June and July that ranged from individual training to battalion and brigade level exercises and included specific amphibious procedures.¹⁹⁴

Coordination at the higher levels, or the lack of it, was a constant struggle prior to 1925. At the governmental level, the multiplicity of organisms that dealt with African issues culminated with the creation in January 1924 of the *Oficina de Marruecos* or Morocco Office as a single entry point of contact for the High Commissioner regarding political guidance.¹⁹⁵ On the military side changes in command structures and relationships succeeded each other continuously until General Primo de Rivera decided to take on the positions of High Commissioner and Commanding General of all forces.¹⁹⁶ This put an end to the direct line of communication with the Ministries of War and State that the *Comandantes Generales* had maintained previously. Once the operations in Alhucemas were successful, Primo the Rivera handed over the position of High Commissary and the military command to General Sanjurjo.¹⁹⁷

General Goded provides an interesting reflection about coordination at the operational level that deserves some attention. In his effort to apply the principles of war to the fight in Morocco, one of the aspects he considered essential was the unity of action, and he used this principle as a guide for some of the improvements that the Army achieved in the period from 1925 to 1927. The first enhancement was the reorganization of the staffs that had maintained thus far one highly influential Operations branch disconnected from a more passive General Issues branch, which was unable to provide the appropriate support. The creation of a Supply and Transportation branch offered that missing link between logistics and operations that had proved so disastrous in previous years. Another field for improvement was the coordination among the

¹⁹⁴ Alfonso Vallés Sales, "Alhucemas: 75 Años Después, Análisis de la Primera Acción Conjunta de las Fuerzas Armadas", *Boletín de Información del CESEDEN* no 272 (November 2001): 79.

¹⁹⁵ Hernández y García, *La Acción de España*, 487.

¹⁹⁶ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 102.

¹⁹⁷ Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, IV-113

different units carrying out one operation; once those units had a coordinated logistical support assured and were linked by radio or telegraph, the scope of the objectives enlarged, and their level of operational proficiency started to arise. Operations consisted no longer of a collection of individual tactical objectives that required their own dedicated resources; the synergy provided by integrated logistic support and modern communication means allowed the occupation of whole tribal areas instead of single *cabilas* as happened before. This change in the conduct of operations was exploited by “(the) magnificent column commanders of 1926 1927 that only needed one mission, some directives and a deadline to accomplish them.”¹⁹⁸ While Goded claimed that in the last years of combat this command style reached its culmination, the examples of Colonel Larrea and Lieutenant Colonel Castro Girona mentioned in the section about stability operations already showed traits of initiative in Spanish commanders.

The Campaigns in Morocco also achieved a level of joint action never seen before in the Spanish military and yet to be seen in many other armies. To begin with, between 1898 and these campaigns a new element had joined the Armed Forces: in the Spanish case, the Aviation Service, integrated into the Army. This service was in its infancy in Cuba and was restricted to captive balloons. In Morocco balloons and airplanes coexisted almost as equals at the beginning, but the latter would finally prevail. Airplane reconnaissance flights started in November 1913 in the area of Ceuta and by the end of the month the first bombs were dropped in support of land operations. By mid-1914 Ceuta, Larache, and Melilla had operational airfields and air assets. Their missions were observation and bombing, but the moral effects caused on both sides were probably the main value of this incipient Military Aviation.¹⁹⁹ Some studies date to 1916 the first action in which ground, air and naval forces acted together and coordinated in an operation in the

¹⁹⁸ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 49, 52-53.

¹⁹⁹ Emilio Herrera Alonso, “El Día de Anyera. Por Tierra, Mar y Aire en 1916”, *Aeroplano. Revista de Historia Aeronáutica*, no 20 (December, 2002): 4-6.

Anyera *cabila*. Air forces supported the action by observation, fire direction, and direct bombing. The navy used naval fires and performed a deception action that distracted the enemy from the main effort.²⁰⁰ These joint operations would culminate in the Alhucemas amphibious landing of 1925, when a joint combined task force conducted, not only a combined amphibious assault but also a previous operation of maritime interdiction, both coordinated with a deception effort in the rearguard by the French Army.²⁰¹ Two significant improvements in joint operations in Alhucemas deserve to be highlighted, first the employment of embarked aviation and second the use of a rudimentary framework of what we would call today a Common Operational Picture by elaborating a common map with aerial photos and a common reference grid for all services.²⁰²

If Alhucemas had any significance for cooperation, it was the military cooperation achieved between French and Spanish. The hidden competition between the countries and the proverbial mutual distrust and disdain was manifested at the military level in several incidents across the entire period discussed in this work.²⁰³ Whereas the Commanders in the field attempted, at least formally, to develop some kind of good relationship, this rarely had any positive impact on the progress of operations. Consequently, the Spanish constantly complained about the permeability of the border between the two countries, the passivity of the French troops during the Annual disaster, and the smuggling that supplied the rebels from the French area. The Spanish did not seek to cooperate with the French either, to the point that, according to General Jordana, the withdrawal in 1924 of the Spanish forces to the *Estella* line had the underhanded strategic objective of turning Abd el Krim against the French. This happened in April 1925.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 9-11.

²⁰¹ Vallés, *Alhucemas: 75 Años Después*, 74-75. Woolman, *Rebels*, 193. Though Woolman suggests that the French offensive was launched “on their own”, the attack was planned and coordinated between the two armies as Vallés points out.

²⁰² Vallés, *Alhucemas: 75 Años Después*, 91.

²⁰³ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 108. Woolman, *Rebels*, 179

²⁰⁴ Gómez-Jordana, *La Tramoya*, 69.

Regardless of other possible considerations, the fact is that eventually Spanish and French understood that they needed to cooperate if they were to finish with Abd el Krim. This understanding materialized in the Madrid Agreement of 1925 for the Alhucemas landing.²⁰⁵ In 1925 the cooperation was limited to the synchronization of operations in both zones and the participation of French naval and air forces in the amphibious landing. Full cooperation was achieved in 1926 and 1927 when a common operation plan was developed. It is interesting to highlight two of the factors that made this cooperation possible, first the knowledge of the French language by the Spanish officers and second the establishment of sincere personal relationships between the people that led this effort. General Goded recounted how he encouraged all the officers posted along the limit between the zones (who had been appointed to their posts because of their ability to speak French) “to see personally this captain or that lieutenant of the French office, have lunch with him, then invite him to have lunch with you in your office, *talk to him* (emphasis in the original), make personal friendships” as the best method to resolve any local dispute.²⁰⁶

Scholarship has usually signaled the final destiny of Abd el Krim as one last point of contention between the two nations. Abd el Krim intentionally surrendered to the French authorities and was deported, with a big part of his family, to the French island of Reunion in the Pacific in September 1926.²⁰⁷ Spanish authorities formally requested the delivery of the Riffian leader in July 1926 as part of the negotiations and coordination between the two nations after the conclusion of the campaign. General Gómez Jordana, present in that conference, admitted the failure of his arguments to bring Abd el Krim in front of the Spanish justice, but on the other

²⁰⁵ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 131. The agreement consisted in three basic points. The clear delimitation of the borders between the two zones, the mutual right to pursue and flight over the other's zone and the participation of French naval forces in the Alhucemas landing.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 130.

²⁰⁷ Woolman, *Rebels*, 207-8.

hand, recognized that, more than likely, the harsh punishment that Abd el Krim would have received would have served to extol his image and worsen that of Spain.²⁰⁸ Maybe the French posture prevented Abd el Krim to become a martyr, but unfortunately it did not improve Spain's image.²⁰⁹

A Balanced and Experienced Force

In 1909 all Spanish soldiers in Africa were conscripts, as in the rest of the army. To achieve the balance Balfour refers to, it was necessary first to create professional units and figure out how to use them. In 1912 the conscription system was reformed to avoid the possibility of exemption in war time although it was still possible to avoid military service in peace time by paying a fee or "*cuota*." In practice, the amount to be paid meant that only the well-off youth could escape from conscription.²¹⁰ Since Spain did not change the sovereignty of the zone, native Moroccans could be not conscripted into the Spanish Army while at the same time they were the perfect candidates for any voluntary force: they saved the life of the Spanish citizens and by joining the Spanish forces they did not join the rebels. That explains why the first professional forces were mostly composed of natives.

The first corps to be created was the Native Police, which appeared already in 1907 as a consequence of the Algeciras conference.²¹¹ Its basic unit was called a "*Mia*" and was equivalent to a Company. The *Mia* commander and deputy were Spanish officers assisted by a native auxiliary bearing the rank of second lieutenant. The remaining members were all natives. Their

²⁰⁸ Gómez-Jordana, *La Tramoya*, 196. Spain accused Abd el Krim of the murder of more than 180 prisoners but was disposed to respect his life as the French had promised him when he surrendered. Though deFrance refused, it seems that they gave Spain the opportunity to select Reunion as his exile destination.

²⁰⁹ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 114.

²¹⁰ Cardona, *El Problema*, 126.

²¹¹ Joaquín de Sotto Montes, "Notas para la Historia de las Fuerzas Indígenas del antiguo Protectorado de España en Marruecos", *Revista de Historia Militar* no 35 (1973): 122.

ranks were maintained as in Morocco (*Mogademin* and *Mokadem* for Sergeants, *Maunin* for Corporal and *Askari* for Soldier).²¹² Their members lived in the villages and their uniforms incorporated indigenous elements. The native police was intended to act as a fighting force by exception, so when combats increased again in 1911 in the Melilla area, the need for new native combat units became apparent. The *Regulares* were founded in 1911 by the impulse of General Berenguer, who was a Lieutenant Colonel at that time. The Groups of Regular Native Forces were a major example of the integration of native and Spanish forces and also the best example of adaptation to the fight that was developing in the Zone of Influence. These forces were conceived as assault forces to integrate the best qualities of both native and Spanish soldiers. As such, they were organized, armed and equipped according to the type of combat that experience had proven was typical in the Moroccan theater. The new unit respected not only Moroccan religion and customs like, lodgement, feeding habits, social treatment and appreciation for colourful uniforms. In practical terms, their obligations and rights were the same as those of the regular Spanish Army and mindful of the larger risks, the pay was higher. Another proof of their adaptation to the theater was their organization as task forces, capable of executing independent operations.²¹³ Officers, most NCOs and some of the machinegun soldiers in the *Regulares* were Spanish whereas most other ranks were natives.²¹⁴ The loyalty of these forces was frequently questioned, especially after the Annual disaster when several native units deserted or even attacked the Spanish.²¹⁵ However, as Balfour remarks, both units had their place in the larger strategic plan. The Native Police was used not only to provide security, but also to obtain information and

²¹² Ibid., 128-129.

²¹³ Sotto, "Notas para la Historia", 134-146. The Groups of *Regulares* survived the Protectorate and still exist today but only with Spanish soldiers. Two groups, heirs of the traditions of those created in 1911, are currently garrisoned in Ceuta, Melilla and the *Plazas de Soberanía*. The *Regulares* troops are the most decorated in the Spanish Army.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 138.

²¹⁵ Woolman, *Rebels*, 88.

sympathy from the locals and, in case of need, for combat operations.²¹⁶ *Regulares* in turn were used as assault forces.

A third type of native unit was employed: the irregular contingents or “*harkas*.” These were not permanently organized, but received payment for their occasional participation in operations. However, some of the “*harkas*” remained active with almost the same composition for long periods of time and could be considered as permanent units. The previous section has already cited the “*harkas*” as an example of reconciliation. In this section other aspects must be highlighted. First, the ability of the regular Spanish Army to integrate an apparently primitive way of fighting with the more academic military science that it was supposed to follow. Second, the leadership of the Spanish Officers and NCOs who were able to lead soldiers belonging to different cultures. Third, the knowledge that those Europeans embedded with the native troops were able to gain about the local environment and their enemy. And fourth, the fact that some “*cabilas*” were eager to offer their contingents to the Spanish is evidence that Abd el Krim was not recognized as leader by all tribes, and the Spanish learnt how to exploit the dissensions on the adversary side.

The other professional unit, the Spanish Foreign Legion or “*Tercio*” would take longer to appear. In January 1920 the King authorized the creation of the *Legión* as a result of the initiative of relatively low ranking, veteran officers that were serving in Africa, most prominent among them Lieutenant Colonel *José Millán Astray*. While this work has not been able to confirm whether the *Regulares* were created by the initiative of the officers posted in Africa or the impulse came

²¹⁶ Sotto, “Notas para la Historia”, 123. As far as 1924, the convenience for the Native Police to carry out combat missions was under discussion in military publications. See Federico Pita, “Misión Política y Táctica de las Fuerzas Indígenas en Nuestra Zona de Penetración en Marruecos”, *Revista de Tropas Coloniales* n° 4 (April, 1924): 8-9, and Pedro Maestre, “Sobre un Tema Obligado”, *Revista de Tropas Coloniales* n° 6 (June, 1924): 7-8.

from Madrid, the *Legión*'s case was clearly a down top effort.²¹⁷ Both units were created, trained and equipped for the special fight that was taking place in Morocco and in both cases the integration of Spanish cadres and Moroccan or foreign soldiers was total. The best proof is how officers and soldiers shared the heavy death toll that both units suffered.²¹⁸

Another important contribution to the learning process of the Army in Africa was the long period of service of those officers who decided to serve in Africa, the “*africanistas*.” This long commitment provided them with opportunities to rotate through different places, posts and ranks, gaining invaluable experience.²¹⁹ However, the prominent participation of many of these officers in the nationalist party during the Spanish Civil War has shadowed their brilliant performance in Morocco, not only as tough fighters but also as innovative military thinkers and reformers.

Organization, Supplies, and Weaponry

In the aftermath of the 1898 defeat the Spanish Armed forces were in a miserable state, not only had the Navy lost her fleet and the Army lots of equipment; the organization was swollen with lots of high ranking Officers, and the morale situation was not any better.

Being military in Spain became more a status and an attitude to life than an activity. For the military life was reduced to routine services and parades; and officers were forced to consume themselves in the administration of an army useless for international war, dedicated only to superficially instruct the illiterate soldiers, to restore order and to judge the unruly.²²⁰

²¹⁷ José E Álvarez, *The Betrothed of Death. The Spanish Legion during the Rif Rebellion, 1920-1927* (Wesport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 2001), 13.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 236. Legion officers suffered 45.94% casualties and troops 38.43%.

²¹⁹ Generals Gómez Jordana (father and son), Aizpuru, Berenguer, Silvestre, Castro Girona, Goded, Sanjurjo, Barrera. All of them spent great part of their careers in Morocco.

²²⁰ Cardona, *El Problema Militar*, 121.

The first consequence of the 1909 campaign was to reorganize the forces in Melilla to adapt to a situation that was no longer the one pictured in the quotation.²²¹ However, the overarching governmental policy of retaining the “more indispensable personnel” and to avoid “damage to the public service and to the Treasury” never allowed the Army to be properly equipped.²²² Weaponry was only one part of the deficiencies; individual equipment, living conditions, and logistical support were in a similar state. These shortfalls had a profound impact in the morale of the troops and were the origin of dishonest behaviours both from conscripts and officers.²²³ Finally, lack of funding affected also projects for civilian development without which military action made no sense.²²⁴ Successive High Commissioners and *Comandantes Generales* were well aware of their lack of resources and informed the numerous governments they had to deal with.²²⁵

It would be unfair though to say that there were no improvements until the arrival of the Directory. At the same time that the Spanish army was struggling in this “*chiquita*” war, most of the world’s armies were experiencing a revolution to which Spain remained alien due to her neutrality in WW I. Particularly, important equipment improvements were made in the Air Forces and the Navy. The last one had to be rebuilt after the defeats of Santiago and Cavite. The process started in 1909 and, following several delays, by 1925 Spain had a capable fleet. Indeed, most of the ships employed during the Alhucemas landing were less than three years old.²²⁶

²²¹ Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, II-314-315

²²² BOZIM nº 1, 36-37. These statements belong to the exposition of motives that preceded the Royal Decree that organized the Protectorate in April 1913.

²²³ Woolman, *Rebels*, 98.

²²⁴ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 55.

²²⁵ Servicio Histórico Militar, *Historia*, II-888. In 1918 Gen Gómez Jordana didn’t ask for more equipment, just to have his TOE filled and soldiers appropriately catered and billeted. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 56. In 1921 Berenguer, who had just been the Minister of Defense, was sending Madrid a long list of requirements.

²²⁶ Cardona, *El Problema Militar*, 123-124.

The development of the Air Force in Africa was extraordinary, as already mentioned. The Moroccan Campaigns represented for the Spanish aviation the same benchmark that WWI represented for most western air forces. In terms of numbers it grew from one squadron in 1913 in Tetuan to at least 160 planes that took part in the Alhucemas landing in 1925.²²⁷ In terms of combat power the Air Force grew from the rudimentary capability of dropping 3.5 kilos bombs in 1913 to the preparation of the Alhucemas landing. Finally, in terms of doctrine, its operational capability expanded from providing observation and limited close support to the ability to conduct independent air campaigns, including participation in a combined joint operation like Alhucemas.²²⁸

The reality is that Primo de Rivera finally dedicated the necessary resources to bring to the Spanish Protectorate what Lyautey had preached and practiced on the French side: sufficient force to convince but enough to defeat if required. Unfortunately, the resistance that could have been easily defeated ten years before had become by then a well-equipped, supported, and lead organization. In words of Abd el Krim “A country with a government and a flag.”²²⁹ Or at least, that was what he believed, and beliefs are sometimes more important than facts.

This desire expressed by the Riffian leader allows for delving again into one of the ideas this investigation has already proposed: that Abd el Krim was responsible for the evolution of the campaigns towards major combat operations. When he resolved to attack Silvestre’s forces in Annual (mindful or not the effects that this would produce), Abd el Krim had already decided to rely on a regular army as the instrument to attain independence from any external authority (foreign or Moroccan) and gain supremacy over the neighbouring tribes. The diversionary attack to Tetuan the eve of the landing, the preparation of the terrain with obstacles and protection

²²⁷ Herrera, *El Día*, 4, 11

²²⁸ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 68-69.

²²⁹ Pennell, *A Country*, 75. This motto would have been proclaimed by Abd el Krim in May 1921 as the expression of his vision.

works and the artillery deployment that waited for the Spanish at Alhucemas prove Abd el Krim's reliance in conventional warfare. This very important consideration permits to review the traditional appreciation that the Spanish Army took the lead in Moroccan affairs and followed a military only approach that culminated in a brutal military offensive supported by superior technology and numbers.

The Civilian Lobbies

During the years that preceded Primo's military dictatorship an active civilian lobby against the war had managed to condition the direction of war. There were in reality up to four civilian lobbies that influenced policy in one fashion or another: the political class, public opinion, the business world, and the bureaucracy. The combination of all four contributed to pull apart government, people, and Army in Spain.

There is not enough space in this work to describe the socio political situation in Spain at the time. It is enough to say that theoretically Spain was a parliamentary monarchy, but still far away from being a true democracy. The bi-cameral parliament was partially elected by selective suffrage in highly corrupt elections and the King had the prerogative of appointing the Prime Minister. Actually, two main parties, Liberal and Conservative were alternating in power. This was the original system devised by *Antonio Cánovas del Castillo* to accompany the restoration of Alfonso XII to the throne in 1874. In Spanish history this system is known as *Restauración*, and several authors posit that Annual was a product of the crisis of that scheme as well as a catalyst for its end.²³⁰ For the politicians alternating in power, Morocco was not always considered an issue of national interest but another of the internal political quarrels and mainly a potential source of social instability as the *Semana Trágica* showed in 1909 or the *Juntas de Defensa* in

²³⁰ La Porte, *La Atracción*, 24. La Porte subscribes to this thesis but also emphasizes the influence of international relationships.

1917.²³¹ Such treatment of the Protectorate affairs resulted in an unclear and vacillating political direction illustrated by the fact that from 1904 to 1927 thirty-three different governments succeeded each other in office.²³²

The political parties that were not included in the alternation of power, especially those which did not support the constitutional Monarchy, exploited the events in Morocco to attack the King constantly as supreme commander of the Armed Forces. In fact, Alfonso XIII had involved himself very much in politics and military affairs. The increasingly active labor and revolutionary movements also directed their animosity against the Army as the main instrument for public order maintenance.

Public opinion, in particular that of the working class, had several reasons to be discontent about the Protectorate. The most important of these was that they were bearing the burden of the policy in Africa. An unfair conscription system, bad living conditions, and constant casualties provided justified reasons for anger that the syndicates and revolutionary parties intensified. This resentment contributed to lack of morale among the ranks and lack of national support for the Moroccan enterprise. As in many other aspects, Annual caused a change in popular attitude. Public opinion reacted to the defeat, and to the horrible accounts arriving from Africa and a wave of patriotism inflamed the country. Unfortunately, the government did not profit from this bittersweet moment.

This is a good place to make a pledge in favor of the Spanish soldier as the fundamental component of the army that fought in Morocco, for his image has also been affected by the usually misleading view of the campaigns. Many times the accounts limit the discussion to the conscript's poor morale, corruption, their lack of combat skills, or to the acts of cowardice during

²³¹ Payne, *Politics*, 123-151.

²³² Fernando García de Cortázar and Manuel González Vesga, *Breve Historia de España* (Madrid, Spain: Alianza Editorial, 1994), 683. To add confusion, very few Ministers of War served in successive governments, more frequently the same government had more than one Minister of War

the retreat from Annual. It is important to appreciate the sacrifice of these soldiers, who battled without pay, without the support of most of their compatriots, enduring really harsh conditions, and who faced up to a formidable enemy. Despite all these hurdles, they fought stoically and were capable of numerous acts of heroism. Remarkably, very few acts of indiscipline happened.²³³

Popular reaction to Primo de Rivera's *Pronunciamiento* was mixed. The chaotic social situation of the moment had fatigued the population which was asking for stability. Primo was also capable of attracting portions of the socialist and moderate syndicalist movement to cooperate with his regime and the promise of a solution to the Moroccan problem was a much needed message for the Spanish people. Thus it is not surprising that the dictatorship was not absolutely rejected by the citizens.²³⁴

Businessmen formed another less numerous but highly influential lobby whose greed was allegedly one of the causes of the intervention of Spain in Morocco. In fact, private initiative was supposed to play a major role in promoting development in the Protectorate and the first campaign in 1909 actually originated in the facilities of one privately owned mining company.²³⁵ The reality was that the wealth of the region was not as much as expected and instability prevented the development of an economic infrastructure capable of sustaining the region. However, the presence and influence of business in the development of the Protectorate also provoked the rejection from part of the public who saw in the war in Morocco the sacrifice of the country for the benefit of the powerful. The disruptive effects of the European companies in the way of life of the locals deserve to be taken into account. Ultimately, Moroccans perceived that

²³³ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 93. Serious incidents only happened in Valencia and Málaga in 1923.

²³⁴ Payne, *Politics*, 203. According to Payne citizens generally approved the Directory. García and González, *Breve Historia*, 557. For these authors the popular reaction was mostly of indifference

²³⁵ Ruiz, *Las Responsabilidades*, 21-24. Ruiz Albéniz narrates in first person the events that caused the incidents in 1909. For the role assigned to the private sector in the establishment of the protectorate, see BOZIM nº 1, 37-38.

foreigners were taking profit from their land instead of them. Therefore, several authors consider the resentment of the tribes against the mining and agriculture companies that operated in the areas south of Melilla as one of the root causes for the massacre of Monte Arruit.²³⁶

But profit also motivated the Moroccans to cooperate with business lobbies. *El Roghi Bu Hamara* was the first who invited the mining companies to start business in the Garet area, irrespective of his authority to do so. Abd el Krim was also subject to influence by Spanish and international economic groups. He had for sure established negotiations with several companies to sell them the mining rights of supposedly extremely wealthy deposits in the Beni Urriaguel area and his brother Mhammed enjoyed a grant to access the mining engineering school in Spain.²³⁷ Another curious example of the influence of business was the extravagant creation of a Rifi Bank and the issue of currency, sponsored by a British named Gardiner.²³⁸ The economic dimension of Abd el Krim's movement remains unnoticed for many authors, especially those who focus on the development of the Republic of the Rif, but some others consider it essential for understanding Abd el Krim's motivations.²³⁹

²³⁶ Pando, *Historia Secreta*, 86.

²³⁷ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 62,199. Woolman, *Rebels*, 77. Madariaga, *España y el Rif*, 240, 377, 488-500.

²³⁸ Woolman, *Rebels*, 127. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 191-2. Goded, *Las Etapas*, 92-3.

²³⁹ Sánchez Díaz, "Retrato Biográfico", 155. The author argues that Abd el Krim had received huge amounts of money from selling rights over inexistent deposits of gold and other minerals, hence his need to prevent Europeans from discovering his plot. The argument sounds a little simplistic but the reality is that he received money and the expected mineral bounty of the Rif was never discovered. A more nuanced interpretation could be that Abd el Krim and his brother fancied out their tribe's mining possibilities as the means to collect money for the cause. It is true that much money was needed to fund his army and he provided it from his personal properties, as the same author testifies in page 144.



Figure 8. Figure 8. One of the banknotes Gardiner prepared for Abd el Krim. Source: Moga, Emilio Blanco, 219

The government bureaucracy was the last lobby which influenced in the efficiency of the Protectorate, if it can be considered a lobby at all. This is not to say that the civilian officials purposely undermined the military action. Most probably the military did not fully develop many useful civil initiatives, in the same way that some others were reasonably rejected. What is worse, many civilian initiatives never came into being. The point here is to stress again the cumbersome administrative structure that enveloped the Protectorate and made slow, expensive and maybe futile many otherwise good initiatives. This circumstance and the intricate political life raised a lot of friction and poisoned human relations to the point of creating another obstacle for what should have been a coordinated governmental action.²⁴⁰ The concept of Protectorate that Spain endeavored to establish in 1913 contained an embryo of the modern “Whole of Government Approach,” but the nature of the institutions and the failure to put the necessary effort and resources aborted the attempt.²⁴¹ Though this section deals mainly with civilian bureaucracy, it is fair to remark that the Army was not free from cumbersome formalities and internal disputes.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Gómez-Jordana, *La Tramoya*, 29, 37

²⁴¹ The exposition of the motives of the Royal Decree establishing the structure of the Spanish Protectorate in 1913, several times cited, proposed an interesting but confusing concurrence of efforts from the different departments of the government, the military, the private sector and the civil society, but the assumption of minimum public expenditure made such intent impracticable.

²⁴² Gómez-Jordana, *La Tramoya*, 48-49, 125-126. In these two sections Gómez-Jordana describes his personal experiences regarding two other prominent officers, Castro-Girona and Goded. Ernesto Giménez Caballero, *Notas Marruecas de un Soldado* (Barcelona, Spain: Planeta, 1983), 111-113. Giménez

This section has provided some of the milestones of the transformation of the doomed Spanish Army of 1898 into the still modest but quite capable one of 1927. It has shown some of the facts that remain imperceptible in most of the literature, frequently because the literature approaches the issue from narrow angles. The analysis of the Spanish Army's evolution normally limits to equipment modernization and increasing reliance on combat. However, this section may interest contemporary officers because it shows how the accumulation of knowledge about the enemy, the environment and about itself that the Army was able to collect –more painfully than desirable, no doubt– allowed to defeat a credible opponent and to continue to providing security for almost thirty years more without resorting to violence. One account of operations in 1926 may illustrate where this process led to.

The account refers to the operations executed under the lead of Major Capaz in the *Gomara* region from June 10 to August 2, 1926 that would become known as the “*Raid Capaz*” in the military literature. Capaz commanded one column of native *harkas* operating in the Gomara region completely isolated from other ground troops and relying only on radio communications with aviation and support from the Navy.²⁴³ The unit was able to live on the ground and move at a relentless pace through the mountainous region by acting like the locals. The outcome of Capaz's raid was the peaceful submission of several of the most isolated and fierce tribes. This extraordinary operation shows first of all the capability to co-opt into the *harkas* native fighters that only few months before had been strongly opposed to the Spanish. The story abounds on several ideas suggested along the paper regarding the abilities learned by the Spanish military: cultural awareness, integration of native forces, reconciliation, joint operations

dedicates a brief chapter of his literary book to his work as typewriter in one Office of the General Staff and describes this military bureaucracy.

²⁴³ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 116-117.

and courage and initiative of their commanders.²⁴⁴ Foremost, the Capaz's venture shows finally that irregular warfare is one of the most effective ways to fight irregular warfare. The Spanish Army, historically adept and master of these tactics, needed a tough reminder to revive its best qualities.²⁴⁵

Conclusion

The campaigns for the pacification of the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco from 1909 to 1927 remain almost unnoticed among the scholars of COIN. Moreover, what little they know is incomplete or distorted due mostly to the point of view from which this literature, especially that written in English, has dealt with the issue. Most books focus on the 1921-26 period and the campaigns against Abd el Krim, almost forgetting that the Spanish Protectorate lasted up to 1956. Some authors are more interested in the repercussions of the campaigns in Spanish politics or in particular aspects of them, like the organization of the Republic of the Rif. This work does not challenge those approaches but considers that to be able to fairly assess the performance of the armed forces it is necessary to study the whole period in which the Protectorate was administered by the military and to do it independently from its impact in events that had not yet happened.

The first conclusion this work has drawn is that, despite the tremendous rout of Annual, the Spanish Army succeeded in imposing the authority of the Sultan to a degree never seen before in that area of Morocco. More important, the triumph was based not only in the military defeat of Abd el Krim's forces, but also in the buildup of a governance structure that provided for a social and material development that had never existed before. The campaigns studied in this paper

²⁴⁴ Goded, *Las Etapas*, 330-337.

²⁴⁵ Balfour, *Deadly Embrace*, 159. Balfour just outlines the missing relation between the fight in Cuba, the Philippines, and in Morocco. The author has not found more documentation about this topic, but considers that it deserves more attention. Martínez de Campos, *España Bélica*, 95-97. Martínez comments how the Spanish completely disregarded the significant influence of terrain in the Melilla scenario of 1909 and instead tried to fight a conventional battle in a European theatre according to new Field Regulations inspired in French doctrine. For him the inspiration should have been the Spanish *guerrilleros* against Napoleon.

established the necessary degree of security and stability from which civilian development could be fostered. At the same time they represent the crucible in which the Army learned the formula that would allow for the future peaceful administration of the protectorate until the creation of the modern state of Morocco. Unfortunately the process was much more excruciating than desirable, and the monograph has strived to highlight some of the circumstances that explain –not justify– the hard path of the Spanish army in the protectorate: international conditions, lack of a clear and resolute national strategy, and popular opposition fueled up by political struggles. However, from the lessons derived from both failures and successes the Army was able to carry out a transformation process from which it is possible to draw some useful and original lessons for COIN doctrine.

The first original approach was the close integration of Spanish and natives in the fight. In all three types of units: Native Police, *Regulares* and *harkas*, Europeans and Africans belonged to the same unit and as such lived, fought, and died together. The system provided soldiers at lower cost than bringing them from the Peninsula, moved many locals away from the rebels, provided jobs for the locals, and profited from their combat skills. Most remarkably, the Spanish that served in those units had the opportunity to learn not only fighting skills but also a great deal of cultural awareness and respect for the people they were protecting. Taking into account what it takes to live together with people from a different culture under combat conditions and the strong bonds that battle creates, this was a good way to gain hearts and minds.

Another valuable learning point was the creation of specific units for the particular type of fight in Morocco. The *Regulares* units were created as light assault troops with the necessary tactical flexibility required for combat in Morocco, and so was the *Tercio*. This last case illustrates also the initiative of the officer corps who persuaded the hierarchy to authorize the creation of the new unit and was able to have it combat ready in less than one year. These units not only diminished the need to employ Spanish conscripts (which was a political constraint), but

assured the necessary continuity of action and learning independent of recruiting or deployment cycles as was the case with peninsular units.

The Spanish Army also understood the value of major combat operations in the COIN fight. The disaster of Annual changed the nature of the fight, for Abd el Krim's strategy was to oppose Spain and France with a conventional army. The Army recognized the need to resort to major combat operations once the enemy's power had become too strong and pursued them resolutely until the total defeat of Abd el Krim forces. In Morocco, as in any other COIN, there was a fraction of the resistance that could only be subdued by force. To succeed in a conventional fight, the Spanish armed forces went through a total transformation, particularly remarkable for the Navy and the Air Force. If the Navy was rebuilt during the campaigns in Morocco, the Air Force was born in Africa, so the three services had to learn to work together. The Alhucemas landing demonstrated a high the level of progress in the execution of joint operations.

But not all the lessons refer to combat, as it is generally believed. If pacification was achieved, it was because combat operations were tied with stability operations. In this regard, another important lesson from these campaigns was that the Spanish interfered as little as possible in the political and social organization of Morocco. Spain established mechanisms to supervise the actions of the *Khalifa's* administration, for sure, but there was no attempt to take away the Islamic influence in society, change the structure of tribal authority or the judicial system, or to challenge the sovereignty of Morocco. In fact, the Spanish were sensible to the peculiarities of the Berber population of that zone of Morocco and managed to find equilibrium between the Arabicized *Makhzen* and the tribal system. The realization that the feared Christian invaders did not intend to change their culture convinced the populace to accept the Protectorate.

Spain understood that the area had to be ruled by the locals and from the first moments of the intervention accepted that chieftains that had risen in arms keep their positions in their tribes as long as they abided by the authority of the *Khalifa*. The army played an important role in this process of reconciliation by admitting soldiers that had fought against Spain in the native forces

and, even more remarkable, creating *harkas* from previously hostile tribes. For this reconciliation method to be effective, starting in 1925, the Spanish army carried out a thorough process of disarmament to avoid factions rising again, either against the Spanish or among themselves.

The most noteworthy achievement of the Spanish Army was the creation of the *Cuerpo de Intervenciones*, perhaps its most effective “weapon” for pacification. The *interventores*, living in close contact with the locals were the intermediaries between the people and the administration. Their key for success was their knowledge of local language, culture and institutions, which allowed them to effectively influence the local leaders. On the other hand, they were the channel to forward the needs of the locals to the administration and to shape and direct the execution of civil development projects in the area under their responsibility. The *interventores* provided a reliable interface and also continuity of the Protectorate action. There is no doubt that the *interventores* constitute a useful model for contemporary CMO units or Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Overall, the campaigns for the pacification of Morocco offer a valid example of a learning Army in a counterinsurgency environment. The Spanish Army was able to adapt to the fight in Morocco, but also to develop a response to the challenge of administering a civilian population. The environmental conditions were very hard, the objective was very ambitious, and unfortunately the process was long and painful. But, in the end, the Spanish Army succeeded in accomplishing the mission it had received -the pacification of the Protectorate in Morocco.

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