

Colonial Domination Strategies

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Abstract :

The French colonial authorities employed many measures to assert dominance in Morocco, notably through the Great Caïds alliances and the Berber Policy in areas where the former was unsuccessful. The Great Caïds initiative enabled local leaders to serve as intermediaries between the populace and colonial authority, granting them responsibilities for tax collection and regional administration on behalf of the French. This strategy proved effective in the High Atlas and southern regions, where local figures like Thami El Glaoui held significant traditional authority. The strategy was unsuccessful in several regions, like the Middle Atlas, where France encountered opposition from tribes that resisted the authority of the Great Caïds due to their independent tribal organizations and challenging geography. Following this failure, France instituted the Berber Policy, which aimed at Amazigh tribes by imposing local regulations in lieu of Islamic Sharia. The objective was to fragment Moroccan society and undermine national cohesion by highlighting Arab-Amazigh cultural and linguistic differences. On May 16, 1930, the Berber Dahir codified this methodology, encountering significant opposition in Morocco. This resistance united Arabs and Amazighs against colonialism. These projects illustrate the adaptability of French colonial practices to local circumstances yet also reveal their limitations when confronted with Moroccan society's resistance and commitment to unity, monarchy, and national identity. These policies served as an incentive for Moroccan nationalists and the monarchy to pursue independence. This paper will employ a qualitative methodology, utilizing a historical method and archive research-based approach to analyse the dynamics and implications of French colonial strategies in Morocco.

Keywords: Colonialism, Great Caïds, Protectorate, Resistance, Colonial Strategy

المخلص

سعت سلطات الحماية الفرنسية خلال فترة استعمارها للمغرب إلى فرض سيطرتها عبر استراتيجيات مختلفة تراوحت بين التحالف مع النخب المحلية، المعروفة بسياسة القواد الكبار، وتطبيق السياسة البربرية كبديل في المناطق التي فشلت فيها الاستراتيجية الأولى. اعتمدت سياسة القواد الكبار على توظيف القادة المحليين الأقوياء كوسيط بين السكان والسلطات الاستعمارية، عبر منحهم سلطات واسعة، كجباية الضرائب وإدارة المناطق باسم الإدارة الفرنسية. نجحت هذه السياسة في بعض المناطق مثل الأطلس الكبير والجنوب، حيث كان القواد المحليون يتمتعون بنفوذ تقليدي قوي،

كما هو الحال مع التهامي الكلاوي. لكن هذه الاستراتيجية لم تحقق النجاح ذاته في مناطق أخرى، مثل الأطلس المتوسط، حيث واجهت فرنسا مقاومة قوية من القبائل، التي رفضت الخضوع لسلطة القواد الكبار بسبب نظامها القبلي المستقل وطبيعتها الجغرافية الصعبة. في مواجهة هذا الفشل، لجأت فرنسا إلى تطبيق السياسة البربرية، التي استهدفت القبائل الأمازيغية مباشرة عبر فرض قوانين عرفية محلية بدلاً من الشريعة الإسلامية. كان الهدف تقسيم المجتمع المغربي وإضعاف الوحدة الوطنية من خلال التركيز على الاختلافات الثقافية واللغوية بين العرب والأمازيغ. تم تكريس هذه السياسة في ظهير 16 مايو 1930 (الظهير البربري)، الذي قوبل

برفض شعبي واسع في جميع أنحاء المغرب، وأسهم في توحيد الصفوف بين العرب والأمازيغ لمقاومة الاستعمار. تكشف دراسة هذه السياسات عن مرونة الاستراتيجيات الاستعمارية الفرنسية في التعامل مع السياقات المحلية، لكنها تؤكد أيضًا على محدوديتها أمام مقاومة المجتمع المغربي وتشبته بوحدته وملكه وهويته الوطنية، ما جعل هذه السياسات نقطة انطلاق للحركة الوطنية والاستقلالية. ستستخدم هذه الورقة منهجية نوعية، معتمدة على الأسلوب التاريخي ونهج البحث القائم على الأرشيف لتحليل ديناميكيات واستراتيجيات الاستعمار الفرنسي في المغرب وتداعياتها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستعمار، القواد الكبار، الحماية،

المقاومة، الاستراتيجية الاستعمارية

Introduction:

To validate its operations in Morocco, the French Protectorate government used a royal mandate conferred by the Treaty of Fez on March 30, 1912. The group presented itself as a partner aimed at aiding the Sherifian Sultan in strengthening his power, maintaining his historical institution, and ensuring order and security inside his realm. Notwithstanding this, the true objectives of the new French administration, aimed at consolidating authority and enacting substantial reforms to the Makhzen (the Moroccan governing system) in alignment with its ideology, were evident promptly. On August 12, 1912, Sultan Moulay Hafid was overthrown for impeding France's efforts in Morocco and for his refusal to collaborate with the institutions of the Protectorate under the new administration. The Grand Vizier Mohammed El Mokri was simultaneously relieved of his duties, indicating the Protectorate's intention to marginalise representatives of the former Makhzen. This action aimed to appease the local populace, who attributed the turmoil across the nation and Morocco's loss of sovereignty to the deceit of these individuals in fulfilling their religious and patriotic duties. The Protectorate's administration structured its connection with the Makhzen via institutional agreements to oversee the obligations shared by the General Residency and the Makhzen within the Protectorate's framework. This resulted in the establishment of the Department of Sherifian Affairs, which acted as a mediator between the General Residency and the royal court. The main objective was to foster amicable ties and obtain the Makhzen's approval

for various French initiatives and undertakings. The French government saw its "native policy" as essential for implementing its plans, especially because it had proven effective throughout the pacification process. The strategy of co-opting local elites substantially diminished Moroccan opposition to French expansion. In return, these elites were granted leadership positions inside the Protectorate. Moreover, people often choose to submit to a locally selected caid to safeguard their lives and preserve their autonomy, rather than yielding to a leader imposed by the foreign conqueror. Consequently, the arrangement seemed advantageous for all parties involved under the new framework.

1. The Policy of Prominent *Caid*s:

The geographical inequalities in the Moroccan terrain necessitated the central authority (Makhzen) to implement a dual approach of inducements and coercion in its interactions with prominent local leaders. This policy involved providing concessions while concurrently exhibiting strength, as part of wider initiatives to enhance the central government's authority over different regions of the country. The Makhzen conferred privileges upon influential individuals, so tying their interests and futures to the central authority's sustained dominance over their spheres of influence. The Makhzen frequently disregarded the transgressions perpetrated by these leaders, especially in their interactions with other social groups, such as Muslim inhabitants, Europeans, and Jewish merchants. This forbearance arose from a concern that these elites may potentially rebel and challenge central authority. In several cases, the Makhzen employed coercion to establish dominance over local leaders and their domains. It utilised some leaders as instruments to impose its authority in return for bestowing upon them exclusive advantages as it said " *imbalance in question is not only a technical... but rather a manifestation of a deeper problem of intellectual colonialism*". (ElFalih, 2024, p158) The commanders of the Haha area, selected directly by the Sultan, were particularly noteworthy. These leaders frequently inhabited state-owned

residences in Essaouira, for which they were free from rental payments. Consequently, they were assigned the responsibility of safeguarding the city and its adjacent regions. Shartor (1997, p. 318) asserts that these leaders frequently thrived in their roles owing to their tribe and familial affiliations. One of the most notable figures was Caïd Abdullah Oubiha Haha, who served as the official representative of the central government in Haha and Sous. Robert Montagne (2013, pp. 108-109) characterises Oubiha as a "hero of the Makhzen," who effectively supervised the Haha, M'touka, Ida Outanane, Taroudant, and Chtouka tribes on behalf of the central authority.

The political and military significance of influential leaders was shown during the conflict for power between Sultan Moulay Abdelaziz and Moulay Hafid. ElFalih (2024, p31) mentions in his article entitled *Colonialism and Local Elites: Lyautey's Colonial Experience in Morocco as a Case Study* that these local leaders were used as part of colonial strategies like "by employing carefully crafted strategies, effectively utilized the Moroccan elite as a pivotal tool for strengthening colonial dominance, all the while preserving the traditional and social values inherent in Morocco. The makhzen elites represent a pivotal component of the traditional Moroccan framework, having wielded considerable administrative and religious authority before the advent of the protectorate" These leaders were instrumental in influencing the outcome, finally compelling Moulay Abdelaziz to abdicate. The southern aristocracy, dissatisfied with the Sultan's growing propensity for European mimicry, proclaimed their intention to rescind allegiance, releasing a declaration on August 24th, 1907, supporting Moulay Hafid as the legitimate sovereign (Gouvion, 2013, p. 246). Moulay Abdelaziz initiated a military campaign (*harka*) to quell the aristocratic resistance, but his troops were vanquished by southern chiefs aligned with Moulay Hafid. This loss compelled him to abdicate the kingdom. The dominance of notable leaders in their districts was consistently jeopardised by intense rivalry among Morocco's elites for positions of control. In areas like Sous, this

competition resulted in instability and turmoil, particularly after the demise of Sultan Moulay Hassan in 1894. The central government abstained from direct participation in these remote regions, choosing instead to endorse the dominant group and validate its supremacy as a representation of the Makhzen.

2. The Protectorate's Approach to Prominent *Caid*s:

The Makhzen's pre-protectorate goals were mirrored in the policy that was implemented during the French Protectorate with reference to the elites of Southern Morocco. It was the goal of the colonial authority to bring back the traditional social and political structures that were administered by tribal chiefs. By employing this strategy, Madani El Glaoui was able to assemble a group of five hundred local fighters in order to launch an assault on Marrakesh, establish the Glaoui dynasty, and put down Ahmed Al-Hiba's rebellion. The Protectorate provided various chiefs with material help, which allowed them to consolidate their influence among their respective tribes. These chiefs were supported by French military personnel, most notably a battalion consisting of 1,500 men under the leadership of General Mangin. With the presence of the military, the reinstatement of leaders such as Caïd El Kandafi in Amizmiz and Caïd Omar Sektani in Oumnast was made possible, despite the opposition from the civilian population. Through the use of artillery bombardments, the French were able to put down the rebellion that the Mesfoua tribe had launched against the Glaoui authority in November of 1912. The strategy of influential leaders exemplified a pragmatic alliance between the Protectorate and local elites. In return for the restoration and consolidation of their tenuous rule until the signing of the Treaty of Fez, the chiefs offered the colonial government military assistance and extensive regional expertise. This partnership addressed intricate problems inside southern Moroccan society that colonial science inadequately comprehended (Rivet, D., 2001, p. 194). General Lyautey endorsed this alliance, promoting collaboration with southern leaders as

Thami El Glaoui, Tayeb El Kandafi, and Abdelmalek El Mtouki. On October 11th, 1912, he expressed this idea as a radical expansion of his civil policy, aimed at enhancing local socioeconomic circumstances and liberating Moroccans from tyrannical local governance. Nevertheless, economic pressures and the demands of European settlements in southern Morocco compelled the Protectorate to implement a strategy of partnership with influential leaders. Considering the Protectorate's restricted understanding of the region and the dangers associated with direct involvement in insurrectionary zones such as Sous, Lyautey contended that such alliances were crucial. He referenced the effectiveness of British colonialism in India, where local rulers (Maharajas) were permitted to govern independently in distant regions (S.H.D.V., 1931, pp. 85-87). Notwithstanding charges that this program perpetuated local feudalism, Lyautey defended it as a provisional strategy to protect French interests during World War I. This strategy allowed the Glaoui administration, especially under Thami El Glaoui, to exert near-absolute authority over the territory while safeguarding French interests (Lanite, 2013, pp. 207-208).

3. Managing Local Rivalries:

In order to advance its interests and maintain political equilibrium in southern Morocco, the Protectorate took advantage of the competition that existed amongst local people. While simultaneously approving Madani El Glaoui's move to dismantle leadership posts created during his administration under Sultan Moulay Hafid, it included Caïd El Ayadi of Rhamna as a member of its network of important persons. Concurrently, it imposed limitations on Caïd El Kandafi's ambitions, so hindering his ability to expand his sphere of influence through expansion. Due to the strategic movements, the southern commanders were driven to gather their troops in order to put down the revolt that Ahmed Al-Hiba was leading in Taroudant. This was motivated by competition for French support. The French continued to take advantage of the disagreements between the chiefs in order to further their colonial endeavours (Rivet,

2001). None of the chiefs wanted to jeopardise their recent relationship with the French administration. The Taroudant campaign, which was led by tribal leaders from southern Morocco in the spring of 1913 with the intention of putting down Ahmed al-Hiba's uprising, was a prime example of the significant effectiveness of French colonial policy in utilising indigenous political and military forces to further colonial goals. The French officers, most notably General Simon, General Mangin, and Officer De Lamothe, formed a coalition with these powerful personalities in order to create a movement that was primarily consisted of local inhabitants. The French soldiers were spared from direct engagement and expenditures, with the exception of a small financial contribution of 419,000 francs to help the local warriors (Al-Mukhtar Al-Soussi, 1961, page 15). This movement carried out a military operation that was fraught with danger. The indigenous strategy of Lyautey was brought to light by the Taroudant movement, which underlined its pragmatic goals. Due to the fact that French authorities merely supplied material support for the operation, the government of France did not suffer any casualties as a result of the suppression of the Al-Hiba conflict. This success was a source of satisfaction for Lyautey, who referred to the operation as the quintessential paradigm for military expansion in Morocco. He described it as carrying out "pacification" campaigns under the pretext of the Sherifian makhzan authority, making use of only local resources, and covertly orchestrating operations through French officers with a minimal amount of overt French participation (Rivet, 2001, page 189).

Throughout the entirety of his administration, Lyautey refrained from making any changes to the social, political, or economic frameworks that existed in southern Morocco. As an alternative, he promoted exchanges between the French state and these elites, rather than implementing strategies to either weaken or increase the authority of particular leaders. The intense competition that existed amongst them rendered it challenging to strike a balance between the utilisation of their abilities and

the maintenance of stability. The decision-making process of the administration was contingent on the cultivation of common interests and the maintenance of pre-protectorate regional power ties. The power of the Klawá leaders, which was associated with Heida Oumouiss in Taroudant, was counterbalanced by the authority of the Kandafi chieftain, who supported Arabi al-Dardouri of Oulouz. Similarly, the formation of coalitions among several factions made it difficult for anyone leader to come to the position of supremacy (Bouchara, 1990, page 253). The economic burden that was placed on France in the aftermath of World War I provided Lyautey with more support for his policy of relying on renowned tribal leaders. A lack of resources made it difficult for the metropolitan centre to adequately sustain its colonial authority. As a result, the metropolitan centre was forced to rely on local elites who were able to administer their domains autonomously and effectively. Despite the fact that it was in direct opposition to the customs and objectives of France's colonial regime, this strategy was regarded as absolutely necessary during the wartime years. When compared to the alternative of assigning a group of lesser leaders to serve under French commanders, the cost of retaining the leadership of southern elites was far lower. The participation of the tribe elders was essential, since it included the recruitment of individuals for the French war effort as well as the support of military operations against regions that were resistant to the French. A number of leaders, like Caïd Madani al-Glaoui, pledged unwavering devotion to France. Additionally, other leaders, including Caïd al-Mtouki and Caïd al-Kandafi, provided crucial logistical support (Mutafakir, 2007, p. 22).

The general residency made use of the cooperation of tribal leaders in order to resist German propaganda and maintain its influence in southern Morocco, despite the fact that it only had a small garrison of 7,000 men. The fact that Caïd al-Ayadi was able to secure the routes between Settát and Marrakech without requiring a significant French military presence is a testament to the success of Lyautey's indigenous strategy throughout the war (A.D.C.N., 1925, page 2401). After the war,

Lyautey continued to support his approach of relying on important tribal leaders. He viewed the sacrifices that these leaders had made during the struggle as a moral obligation to ensure that they were able to maintain their rights. This approach typically placed a greater focus on emotional and moral considerations than it did on attaining strategic colonial goals. Following the untimely demise of Caïd Madani al-Glaoui in 1918, his brother, Thami al-Glaoui, was appointed to reinforce the leadership positions, in opposition to chances for administrative reform (A.D.C.N., 1934, p. 1317). The residency continued to adhere to its strategy of picking successors from the families of these elites in order to ensure that they would continue to be loyal to the residency (A.D.C.N., 1919, page 157). As a result of the dominance of tribal chiefs in southern Morocco, the authority of French officers was decreased, and their job was reduced to that of providing little oversight. A great number of officials have voiced their discontent with the fact that they do not have a significant impact over the administration of the local government, describing their roles as ones that are powerless and degrading. The French presence in certain regions, such as Talaouine, was limited to surveillance, which gave the impression to the locals that the French authority was not firmly established (Gruner, 2013, pp. 84-86). The unconstrained authority of tribal chiefs was met with increased dissatisfaction from the general populace as a result of social and economic improvements, most notably the beginning of agricultural settlement programs. Their exploitative practices intensified the dissatisfaction of the local population, which in turn undermined faith in the authorities of both Morocco and France. In response, Lyautey advocated for a colonial government that was more structured and more accountable, and he pursued modifications that were gradual in nature in order to reduce the reliance on tribal leaders. (Al-Jarrari, 1998, page 167; Rivet, 2001, pages 179-182) This change was met with hostility by existing elites, whose uncontrolled power and money accumulation continued to block larger development aspirations throughout the course of time.

Conclusion:

The administration of the Protectorate preserved the tradition of creating and renewing the Makhzen, the traditional Moroccan governing body, from members of established families. As a result, the selection of candidates for the top Makhzen seats continued to be something of a hereditary privilege. By retaining the formal ceremonies of sovereignty that were rich in symbolic significance, constructing combinations to achieve internal and external equilibria, and resolving the severe injustices that existed within Morocco's social structure, these families were able to preserve the Makhzen traditions. For the purpose of establishing its power inside the Moroccan setting, the Protectorate relied on ties with tribal chiefs. Nevertheless, the competition that existed between these important characters, in addition to the numerous local particularities, made it difficult to identify individuals who would be advantageous to the regime in a clear and consistent manner. As a result of this, the French Residency was required to devise a definite set of criteria for the selection of prominent individuals who were qualified for support and partnership. Family affinity was one of these elements that had a role. In order to maintain stability in indigenous communities, the Residency was designed to ensure that individuals from families that had historically been related to local authority were given leadership roles. This was done with the intention of averting disturbances that may result in significant losses of both human and material resources. The Residency depended on warriors who were capable of providing military aid and keeping order inside their regions with a significant amount of rigour. These combatants regularly exceeded the bounds of their power and engaged in repressive conduct. The customary understanding of Makhzen authority in Morocco was demonstrated by this. The Residency seized on the tremendous power of these individuals, highlighting their capacity to control rivals and suppress opposition, so establishing their reputation as the exclusive authority inside their areas. Throughout the entirety of the Protectorate era, this became the principal criterion that was used to choose Makhzen candidates for positions.

The selection of Makhzen leaders was heavily influenced by the wealth and asset ownership of the individuals who were considered to be elites. The possession of these assets served as evidence of their dedication to preserving ownership and their aspiration to get privileges, which facilitated their recruitment and strengthened their power within the common interests that they shared with the new leadership.

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