Heroes of Empire

FIVE CHARISMATIC MEN AND THE CONQUEST OF AFRICA

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Four journeys: Brazza, Stanley, Marchand, and Kitchener.
AFTER THE HUMILIATING DEFEAT OF 1870, French commentators of all ideological stripes turned, as we have seen, to the celebration of heroes past and present. With the exception of Joan of Arc, a female warrior who dressed as a man, all these heroes were male. In a post-defeat atmosphere of fear at the prospect of national decline, and even extinction, French writers emphasized the heroes' exemplary courage and selflessness, their willingness to sacrifice themselves to save the nation. In response, a great many French men looked to fencing, dueling, and sport as the means to nurture a manly courage and prepare for an anti-German revenge. But despite the surge of interest in these virile arts, until the Dreyfus Affair, most commentators continued to represent France's standing army as the deepest reservoir of valor the nation possessed. The great past heroes—Vercingetorix, Roland, Napoleon—had, after all, been soldiers. But the French army's failures in 1870–71 and the lack of Western European wars after that time made it difficult to identify new military heroes in mainland France. One alternative was to resurrect heroes of the past—the late century saw the revival of Napoleonic cults and the embrace of Joan of Arc; the other was to extol the colonies, where the near-constant warfare of the 1880s and '90s allowed a different kind of military heroism to emerge. It was partly for this reason that then-colonel Hubert Lyautey, soon to become one of France's leading colonial actors and propagandists, began in the 1890s to seek the potential for national regeneration among those who served in colonies. But that service had to seem relatively peaceful, for the gruesome colonial battles of the late nineteenth century, many of which went poorly for the French and disturbed their republican sensibilities, made commentators squirm about the prospect of continuing bloodshed in the colonies. In this context, national salvation seemed to require military heroes at once virile and pacific, forceful and gentle, men who wielded an "iron fist in a velvet glove." Lyautey, like Brazza, came to represent such a heroic ideal. As a "pacific conqueror" and advocate of benign colonial rule, Lyautey succeeded in attracting broad support among the French public, conservative and republican alike, both for himself as military hero and for his effort to make Morocco the jewel in France's imperial crown. Lyautey's eventual status as a colonial hero suggests, once again, that colonialism could command widespread interest in France, but on two conditions: that it appear to revolve around and be identified with a single charismatic individual and that it seem to take place in a peaceful, civilized way.

In the late 1890s, Lyautey developed a novel theory of colonization while serving under General Joseph Gallieni in Indochina and then Madagascar. The approach had originated with Gallieni, but it was Lyautey who articulated it for a nonmilitary public in an influential article of 1900, "The Colonial Role of the Army." In that essay, Lyautey maintained that a successful process of colonization required a unified military and political leadership—a single man, "the right person in the right place," to direct the entire operation. Algeria, Lyautey wrote, had demonstrated the irrationality of a military-civilian administrative divide, and he sought to bring together as a seamless whole the process of conquest, economic development, and pacification. Translated into our own contemporary language, Lyautey's method was to bring under unified military command the processes of military occupation, nation building, and the effort to win hearts and minds.

Since none of this could take place without an army, the "right man" had to be a military officer, normally a general, who possessed both strategic acumen and administrative skills. The general should, that is, be the individual charged with running the new colony. He should possess a margin of independence from Paris in order to respond properly to local conditions, and he should control the resources, in terms of both money and manpower, to develop the country economically. Above all, the leader needed to understand his duties in political terms far more than military
ones. Gallieni had long condemned a purely military approach to colonization in which a traditional column of forces conquers a territory and then moves on, leaving the subdued area to civilian administrators. The latter, he said, were unprepared to control lands that inevitably remained unpacified for a significant period of time.

The Gallieni-Lyautey alternative was to have colonial troops occupy a territory and remain in place. The officers and men would immediately begin the process of stabilization and economic development. Pacification, Lyautey wrote, came not through military measures but through the army's successful effort to improve the lives of indigenous people. Earlier, Lyautey had described this process as the _tache d'huile_ or oil-stain approach to colonization. The army would establish an initial presence and then, by bringing in markets, telegraph lines, roads, medical care, and other services, show the locals the benefits of French civilization. As new resources poured in, people living on the fringes of the area would be convinced to join in, thus extending the reach and effectiveness of the original military occupation. In this way, French influence, and eventually French rule, would spread gradually, like an oil stain, into an ever-expanding spread of territory. Colonization would be a largely "pacific" process, requiring only an initial military intervention. Once the army established its beachhead, all the subsequent steps would, of necessity, be nonviolent. The army would thus "create life," as Lyautey put it, rather than sow destruction, as in the case of European wars or old-fashioned colonial campaigns. Lyautey's was an alternative version of foreign minister Delcassé's "pacific penetration" (exercising control by coaxing the Sultan into debt), one that recalled Brazza's "conquête pacifique."

The preference for protectorates over direct French rule became another key element of the method Lyautey attributed to Gallieni but which he had actually learned from Jean-Marie de Lannesan, France's governor-general in Indochina from 1891 to 1894. As Lyautey wrote: "Instead of abolishing the traditional systems, make use of them: Rule with the mandarins and not against him. . . . Offend no tradition, change no custom, remind ourselves that in all human society there is a ruling class, born to rule, without which nothing can be done, and a class to be ruled: Enlist the ruling class in our service. Once the mandarins are our friends, certain of us and needing us, they have only to say the word and the country will be pacified."

In hindsight, such a comment seems almost bizarrely naïve; to understand it properly requires two elements of context. The first is the earlier history of French colonization in Indochina, the place to which Lyautey's comments refer. There, French forces encountered such resistance in the 1880s that the government's political opponents called its entire colonial effort into question. The second context is Lyautey's own royalist and aristocratic culture. For him, a republican government was a contradiction in terms; it violated a Burkean "natural order of things" by forgetting that one class was "born to rule" and everyone else "to be ruled."

Colonialism, if managed properly, would maintain abroad the social hierarchy republicanism had overturned in France. Nothing did Indochina more harm than direct French rule, which extended the republic's unnatural administrative state to the colonial situation. The result was a chaos of violent rebellion, which required violent repression in return. This is why, according to Lyautey, French colonialism had encountered so much resistance. By reverting to mandarin leadership and the natural order of things, French colonial governors would allow themselves to profit from the traditional hierarchy of rulers and the ruled. The mandarins would say the word, and pacification would ensue. In practice, colonial administration never became so simple, although Lannesan and Gallieni's willingness in certain cases to return local authority to traditional elites helped make their Indochinese regime of the 1890s more successful than those of earlier years.

After the turn of the century, France's colonial lobby embraced Lyautey's views and quickly adopted Lyautey himself, making him a key member, Promoted to general in 1904, the officer corresponded with virtually all of France's leading colonialists. Most important among them was Eugene Etienne, the moderate republican who represented Oran, Algeria, in the Chamber of Deputies and stood out as one of the Chamber's leading members. So central was his colonial role that a fellow representative, Etienne Flandrin, declared, "The man who holds the portfolio as minister of colonies changes regularly, but the real minister of colonies never changes; it's always M. Eugene Etienne." At Lyautey's request, his correspondents circulated his missives widely within pro-colonial circles. The letters recounted Lyautey's military experiences after being appointed commanding general in the South Ounais region of Algeria, which bordered on some of Morocco's rebellious tribal zones. They also elaborated Lyautey's understanding of how the sharifian empire should be colonized: not by making the sultan's government, or Makhzan, economically dependent on France, as Delcassé advocated with his doctrine of "peaceful penetration," but by gradually infiltrating Morocco from the south and spreading French influence through the _tache d'huile_ strategy. Lyautey's own...
version of peaceful penetration appealed to colonialists impatient for measurable success in Morocco. It also reassured ordinary French men and women uncomfortable with the atrocities all too evident in the Congo and with the colonial violence characteristic of the 1890s.  

Although Lyautey remained largely unknown to the broad public in the early 1900s, he would soon become one of France’s great colonial heroes, especially among people of conservative and moderate political views. Even among leftists, Lyautey would attract a measure of support thanks to his stance as a latter-day “conquérant pacifique.” The ardently republican and anti-militarist paper Gil Blas distinguished Lyautey from the typical colonial soldier for whom “the end all and be all [of military life] is to drink, swear, punish, and knock people around.” Lyautey, by contrast, represented “a breath of fresh air, a new spirit.” He was one of the rare officers who “subordinates warfare to diplomacy,” making him “one of the most likeable figures of our time.”  

Lyautey’s ability to reach beyond conservative and nationalist circles would prove crucial in the years following the Dreyfus Affair, when a great many French men and women placed intellectuals and republicans in one camp and army officers and priests in the other. Lyautey’s standing as a man of letters—literally, as he wrote thousands of letters during his lifetime, carefully conserving copies for later publication—placed him partly in the military sphere and partly in the realm of literary and intellectual life.

Lyautey’s letters enabled him to orchestrate his own image, both contemporary and historical, extremely well. The handwritten texts, which a great many politicians, journalists, and literary personalities avidly read, established his standing within the French elite. Soon, members of this elite would help a broad public see him as a charismatic hero and popular icon. The published letters have shaped virtually all historical and biographical accounts of the marshal’s colonial career, and much of what we know of his early years comes from an unpublished memoir he wrote in 1919 and deposited among his family papers for future historians to see.  

Although it is impossible entirely to escape Lyautey’s attempts to shape the historical record to his liking, several recent scholarly biographies give us good critical distance on his life.

Lyautey’s unusual personal and political trajectory began in 1854, in Nancy, capital of the old French province of Lorraine. He descended from a long line of high-ranking military officers, bourgeois on his father’s side, noble on his mother’s. His maternal lineage harked back to the eleventh century and the quintessentially Norman vicomté de Falaise. All his biographers agree that a crucial turning point came very early in his life, when at eighteen months he tumbled from a second-floor balcony. He likely would have died save for a first-floor awning that broke his fall. The baby ricocheted off the shoulder of a soldier parading with his brigade and landed headfirst on the street. Doctors initially believed Hubert had suffered a minor injury to his skull, from which they pronounced him cured within a matter of weeks. But a year later, he began to experience severe pain in his lower back, and the agony resumed periodically over the next two years. At age five he found it difficult to walk. The family doctor grew concerned, and a young colleague discovered that his spinal cord had been injured in the original fall, creating a huge abscess above his groin. Local doctors had no idea how to treat the boy’s condition, and they consulted, by telegraph, the leading specialist in Paris, one Dr. Vépeau. Unable to come to Nancy, Vépeau sent written instructions to a local surgeon courageous enough to attempt the delicate operation. As Lyautey later described the procedure, “The surgeon cut four holes in my back and through them they butchered me for a half-hour straight. Doctors didn’t yet use chloroform.”

With the abscess removed, the surgeon wrapped Hubert in an “orthopedic corset” that kept him completely immobilized for two solid years. Day in and day out, he lay prone on a metal bed. His mother, aunt, and grandmother showered him with loving care, relieving his pain and boredom while cheering him up. In his memoir of 1919, Lyautey depicts the warmth and affection of his convalescence as if it had happened in the recent past. Historians have made a great deal of this constant attention from the women of his family, suggesting that it feminized a young boy who would otherwise have been outside in the rough-and-tumble with his peers. His long immobilization could not but have a powerful psychological effect, but it hardly follows that it would determine his future sexual orientation. In any event, once Hubert regained the ability to walk at age eleven, he made a point of competing harder in sports than the other boys and of taking the lead in their playful “military attacks” on neighboring towns.

If Lyautey’s enforced bed rest moved him to prove his maleness later on, it also accustomed him to a breadth of literature greater than almost any child his age. Confined to bed around the clock, Hubert had nothing else to do but read. Family records list many of the books he devoured: history, especially military history; travel literature; explorers’ narratives and missionaries’ accounts; works of geography and natural science. When
criticized the High Command for failing to use the army as an agent of (conservative) social reform. Far from brooding over his punishment, Lyautey, now a major, jumped at the chance to escape metropolitan France's gloomy military routines. En route, he already felt "far from the mummification of our moribund, idle, routine-plagued army. It is a resurrection."  

In Hanoi, Lyautey served under two men who greatly impressed him, Governor-General de Lanessan and especially Gallieni, whom Lyautey called "this magnificent specimen of a complete man." From Gallieni, Lyautey would discover a stable identity and his true vocation in life. He was to be a modern colonial officer, a man who ruled subject peoples more by persuasion, charm, and energy than by brute military force—a man galvanized by the rejuvenating energy that percolated in the exhilarating colonial sphere. To his boyhood friend Antonin de Margerie, Lyautey wrote that his time in Indochina had made him realize he was an "animal of action," an individual "now in a position to be another Cecil Rhodes ... one of those in whom others believe and in whose eyes thousands of other eyes look for order." Growing up, Lyautey had nourished himself on the dream that his "voice and pen" would make "avenues reopen, countries repopulate and cities spring to life." He now understood that any failure to realize these dreams would constitute a "sharp set-back," a debilitating disappointment. "More than ever, I feel that, deprived of productive action, powerful and immediate, I eat away at myself, corrupt myself, and all my abilities corrode from disuse."  

The problem was that at this point, age forty-one in 1896, he had not yet outgrown his need for a mentor, a surrogate father to guide his way. When Lyautey heard that Gallieni was leaving Indochina to assume command in Madagascar, the younger man sank into such despair that he threatened to leave the army and return to France. Fortunately, Gallieni requested his presence in Madagascar, and nothing could have made him happier: "Wherever you are," he wrote Gallieni, "whatever you want to do with me, I will always and everywhere be at your service." In Madagascar he earned promotion to lieutenant colonel and was posed to become a soldier-administrator, the main pillar of Gallieni's approach to colonization. This new assignment moved him from depression to exhilaration and enabled him to take a large step toward personal independence. "The essential thing," he wrote, "is to know what one wants and where one is going. Now, I know what that is."  

Until 1897, when he arrived in Madagascar, Lyautey had mostly thought of colonies in terms of their apparent political, economic, and moral benefits.
for France, of their ability to awaken military valor, and of the possibilities they opened for him as an officer. In Madagascar he also formulated a version of the civilizing mission, of colonization as agent of progress for backward realms of the globe. "Even if France were to gain nothing [from colonization,] wouldn’t we at least have been the makers of a providential transformation on this planet? If we have brought life, culture, and people to regions in the grip of banditry and economic sterility; if we have remade their rivers into channels of communication ... if we have unleashed the productivity of their forests, resurrected their fertile but uncultivated valleys, ... our presence, even if temporary, will have left a useful trace."33

As with most colonialists, these ideals largely remained just that; the reality of empire proved far bloodier and less altruistic than such a statement implied.34 In Madagascar, the practice of French colonialism left little room for human progress and economic advance. The Malagasy elite had made their disinterest in a French protectorate abundantly clear, having successfully resisted it for nearly a dozen years when Lyautey set foot on the island in 1897. Under these circumstances, Gallieni, now a brigadier general, received a mandate to quell the "native insurrection" by all necessary means. A bloody campaign ensued, complete with the assassination and exile of indigenous rulers and their expulsion from positions of economic power.

Madagascar revealed the gaping hole in the Gallieni-Lyautey method of colonization: it worked only if the existing elite and most of those it ruled agreed to collaborate with the French. Where such agreement did not exist, as in Madagascar, Gallieni put his methods aside. His troops imposed direct French governance learned only by a local puppet regime he saw fit to install.35

These developments might have made Lyautey alter his assessment of the Gallieni method; instead he became its chief spokesman. The cynical view of this apparent contradiction holds that for Lyautey, as for his mentor, the "pacific," native-oriented approach to colonization served mainly as a propaganda tool designed to win over a French public eager for colonies but squeamish about the idea of killing a great many people to obtain them.36

There is perhaps an element of such calculation in Lyautey’s views, but no evidence of it exists in his voluminous correspondence.37 Lyautey likely believed in the method he would articulate so well; it’s just that to work properly, it required that indigenous people act in what he understood to be their best interests. When they behaved otherwise, the French were morally obliged to prepare them for civilized life. After Madagascar, Lyautey would apply these ideas to Morocco, forcing people at gunpoint to accept the "benign protectorate" he would have preferred to impose in peace.

When Gallieni returned to Paris for consultations in June 1899, he brought Lyautey along to serve as his public face. At a meeting of the Union Coloniale Française, the younger man advertised his mentor’s method of "peaceful conquest" to an appreciative audience. The pro-colonial press gave the speech favorable coverage, and the Revue des deux mondes published it as "Du role colonial de l’officier" a few weeks later. With this article, Lyautey made himself a key member of the pro-colonial elite and propagandist of note. Soon he would eclipse Gallieni, who possessed none of Lyautey’s elegance and social ease.

Lyautey’s influential friends, Albert de Mun and the novelist Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, both well-connected aristocrats, introduced him to Parisian high society. There, he sparred as a conversationalist and impressed with his wit, intelligence, and broad knowledge of art and literature. His lieutenant and confidant Alfred de Tarde would later call him a “Swann with epaulettes.”38 In fact, there was no one like Lyautey—no one at once a high-ranking officer and elegant literary man, a mustached soldier as much at home in desert and jungle as in drawing rooms of the elite. Those who knew him endlessly commented on his suave body and impeccable grooming, his nervous energy and hypomanic personality. His personal charm and seductiveness were legendary as were his poltical and negotiating skills.

To contemporaries, what we would now call his sexual orientation largely remained unmentioned, at least in public, though people in the know often attributed the following remark to Clemenceau: "[Lyautey] is an admirable, courageous man who has always had balls between his legs ... even when they weren’t his own." In another, perhaps apocryphal comment, Madame Lyautey remarked to her husband’s circle of young officers: "Gentlemen, I have the pleasure of informing you that last night I cuckolded you all."39 No one has ever produced definitive proof that Lyautey was a practicing homosexual, and until recently, historians have largely danced around the subject. André Maurois’s foundational biography, written while his subject was still alive, does not mention Lyautey’s sexuality.40 Other writers who knew him, like later historians, spoke of his admiration for ancient Greek statuary, his "androphilia," feminine traits, and explosive emotionality, but never broached the term "homosexual."41

Only recently have historians been more explicit. Christian Gury argues that Lyautey inspired Proust’s gay character the baron de Charlus, a man virile on the outside and effeminate underneath. To support this and other
claims, Gury brings together a great deal of circumstantial evidence about the general’s sexual orientation. Lyauty did not marry until age fifty-five and fathered no children. The only women in his life were his mother and sisters, to whom he remained very close, and a young woman named Louise Baignères, who wanted desperately to marry him. Partly to escape pressure from Louise and her parents, he eagerly fled to Indochina in 1894, citing his personal incompatibility with the institution of marriage.42 Lyauty, Gury suggests, wrote admiringly about the unclothed male body and penned homoerotic prose about Africans, Arabs, Greeks, and Ceylonese. He loved to dress up in elaborate Arab garb, and he decorated his headquarters, and even his tents, with Persian carpets, expensive silks, and delicate porcelain. He sipped his tea in fine china and brought tasteful furnishings from his native Lorraine.

Lyauty did, it turns out, have one intense friendship with a woman, the brilliant social rebel Isabelle Eberhardt, who flaunted every imaginable convention of female identity. The illegitimate daughter of a French-speaking mother and a defrocked Russian Orthodox priest, Eberhardt grew up in Switzerland, where her father taught her Latin and Greek, as well as classical Arabic, French, German, Italian, and Russian. From early adolescence, she dressed as a boy and spent her time working and playing with young men. In 1897 she escaped Europe for Algeria, where she joined the Sufi brotherhood and eventually married a Muslim Arab named Slimène Elhini, a spahi, or native soldier in France’s Algerian army. Eberhardt kept a diary, wrote short stories, and managed to scrounge a few paid writing assignments. In February 1901 an unknown Arab man tried to kill her, claiming afterwards that a voice had told him to attack her because she was a rich European dressed as a man. In 1903 an Algerian newspaper sent her to the South Oranais to cover Lyauty’s raids into Morocco. The general found her deep knowledge of Arabic culture useful for his military campaigns, and he admired her nonconformist behavior. She, in turn, felt attracted to his combination of military toughness and aristocratic elegance. They became fast friends, and she was known to spend entire nights in his tent—for long conversations, they both said. It is possible that they slept together, and if so, it would mean that the one woman he had sex with was a Muslim convert who traveled with the Foreign Legion and dressed as a man.43

If Lyauty did in fact have a sexual preference for men, he kept his private behavior carefully hidden, as did most homosexual men at that time. The army was, in fact, one of the best places for gay men to remain discreet; there, a homosexual could spend his life in the company of uniformed young soldiers while exhibiting the virility and honor seemingly inherent in a military career.44 Service in the colonies only enhanced one’s apparent masculinity, since after 1870 these were the only places where French soldiers actually fought. Whatever the realities of Lyauty’s sexual practice, the general public learned nothing of his proclivities. The private life of public figures remained off-limits to mainstream journalists throughout the Third Republic, and such was especially the case for military leaders. In formal correspondence, people addressed the army brass in a familial way—“Mon Général,” “Mon Colonel.” As national father figures, generals, like priests, appeared to possess little or no sexuality. The same was true of most political leaders, with the notable exception of Joseph Caillaux. When the former prime minister’s political opponents made his extramarital affairs an issue in 1914, they crossed an indelible political line, revealing the depth of their antagonism toward him and highlighting the rarity of sexual allegation in the political culture of pre-1914 France.45

As Lyauty’s reputation grew during the first years of the twentieth century, his approach to “peaceful” colonialism came into conflict with a French government committed to its own version of soft imperialism forged in the wake of the Entente Cordiale with Britain (1904). Delcassé and others from the Foreign Ministry favored what they termed “peaceful penetration,” an effort to seize eventual control of Morocco by loaning its government increasing sums of money.46 The assumption was that the Makhzan would be unable to repay the loans and that its defaults would allow French officials to seize Moroccan resources in compensation and progressively bring Morocco’s economy under Parisian control. This assumption proved correct: French officials began to confiscate the country’s income from customs receipts, taxes, and other sources and to serve as “advisers” to the Makhzan. Before long, the sultan found himself at the financial mercy of the French, who now exercised an effective veto over Moroccan fiscal policy, such as it was, and over important elements of its foreign trade.47

These developments pleased French bankers but failed to give France the kind of political control colonialists wanted. During the first decade of the twentieth century, so much of Moroccan society stood in open and often violent rebellion against the sultan that the mounting French domination of his government and bureaucracy did not extend to the country as a whole. Worse, as French control increasingly exposed the weakness
and impotence of the Makhzan, growing numbers of tribes joined the rebellion against it and thus against the French.48

The limits of French authority became crystal clear in the international sphere when the kaiser landed, with great fanfare, at Tangiers in March 1905, symbolically asserting the right to intervene in Moroccan affairs. This bold demonstration of German claims, with its implicit rejection of the Entente Cordiale, angered and frustrated French colonialists and proved to the most ardent among them the need for a different approach to Morocco. This second group turned to Lyauty, who promised to extend French control over Morocco, not by mining the Makhzan in debt, but by taming the rebellious tribes. Lyauty had already shown his willingness to stage incursions into Morocco in open defiance of Delcassé, who had ordered him not to cross the Algerian border. Etienne, surrounded by his Comité du Maroc, egged the general on.

For Etienne and Lyauty, Morocco stood as the last potentially important piece of unclaimed African land. It had retained its independence throughout the nineteenth century because each European power sought to prevent any other from seizing control. No continental government wanted Britain to colonize Morocco, as London’s possession of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal already made the Mediterranean too much a British lake. And Britain, jealous of its Mediterranean hegemony, was disinclined to allow another power to occupy a part of Africa only a stone’s throw from its own precious rock. Beyond these strategic European concerns stood the reality of Morocco itself, a country whose mountain ranges, tribalism, and powerful Islamic traditions made it extremely difficult to conquer—as the French would soon discover.49

Such realities rarely deterred ardent colonialists. When the Entente Cordiale removed British objections to French predominance in Morocco, Etienne and his allies stepped up their efforts to promote French expansion into this unclaimed portion of the Maghreb. But once Lyauty and his French colleagues set foot in Morocco, they found themselves overwhelmed by political, social, religious, and incipient nationalist conflicts they did not understand. After the turn of the century, Morocco was a society at war with itself and with outsiders who sought to bring it peace.

Morocco had entered the twentieth century unprepared to confront the political and economic challenges the new era would bring. The country’s economy was weak, its government and army largely unreformed. The young sultan, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, who succeeded to the throne in 1900, attempted to bring his bureaucracy and military closer to European standards, but doing so only saddled him with a mountain of debt. To pay off his loans and strengthen his regime, ‘Aziz had to impose higher taxes on the country’s multitude of tribes. A sultan who enjoyed widespread legitimacy might have been able to make the tribal leaders pay, but ‘Aziz was too young and inexperienced to impose his will on a society divided by so many competing loyalties.50 The central government had always ruled Morocco’s fractious tribal society with great difficulty, and the country’s history turns on the complex relationships among the Makhzan, cities, tribes, great families, and religious leaders (ulama).

What made Morocco so difficult for Europeans to understand, let alone master, was its tradition of shifting alliances within a system in which everyone in theory owed allegiance and obedience to the sultan, believed to be a direct descendant of the Prophet. Like most Europeans, Delcassé and Lyauty mistakenly viewed Morocco as a country divided into two, essentially permanent contesting forces—the Makhzan versus the tribes. Delcassé maintained that the French could capture Morocco by dominating the Makhzan and then gradually extending its influence. Lyauty thought he could colonize the country by pacifying one tribal area at a time until he had absorbed the entire realm. What neither man grasped was the tendency for the Makhzan and tribes to come together in the face of foreign intervention. European pressure on the Makhzan could produce tribal rebellions on its side, and attacks on the tribes could force the sultan to intervene, military or diplomatically, on their behalf.

If foreign intervention could bring Makhzan and tribes together, it could also split them apart, though not in ways helpful to the French. After 1900, Morocco witnessed a series of uprisings against a sultan perceived as too close to the Europeans and prone to levy taxes at London or Paris’s behest. Such perceptions trapped the sultan in an impossible situation. He needed French money and advisers to prevail over the tribal revolt, but to obtain these resources, he had to make arrangements that alienated growing numbers of people. Either way, he risked losing the support of key notables and high Makhzan officials, who might abandon him if the revolt grew too powerful, but who opposed giving the French mounting influence over Moroccan affairs.

By intervening in shari‘i affairs, the German government sought to take advantage of these conflicts, not out of any particular sympathy for the sultan but to maintain the Reich’s share of the Moroccan trade and satisfy Germany’s own colonial lobby. To profit from European rivalries,
the Makhzan called for an international conference over the status of Morocco. The meetings took place in Algiers, Spain, next door to Gibraltar. At Algiers, French diplomats outmaneuvered their German counterparts, convincing most of the other European representatives to give them preponderance in Morocco. In practice, this outcome meant broad power for France over most aspects of Morocco’s political and economic life.

The sultan had no choice but to ratify the Algiers agreement, but by doing so, he turned much of his country against him. The French, meanwhile, used the treaty to resume their policy of peaceful penetration. They solidified their control of Moroccan customs and the port police, deepened their influence on the Makhzan’s army, and established medical facilities in the major cities. French settlers streamed into Tangiers and Casablanca, where they appeared to thicken their country’s control. Neither the Moroccan elites nor the majority of their countrymen had accepted the idea of an increased French presence, and both began to express their opposition through acts of violence against Europeans.

In May 1906 a young Frenchman was murdered in Tangiers; ten months later, a French tourist taking photographs in Fez suffered a severe beating and would have been killed without the chance intervention of two Makhzan soldiers passing by. The most politically significant incident came when an angry Marrakech crowd brutally murdered the French medical missionary Emile Mauchamp. Smug and abrasive, the young doctor found himself accused of spying for French commercial interests when he helped a scientist set up geological equipment. The Arabs mistook the equipment for a wireless telegraph post, a misperception Mauchamp deliberately encouraged by pretending to erect an antenna on his roof. Shortly afterwards, a dozen men attacked him with sticks, rocks, and knives, crushing his skull and slashing his body. The assailants stripped the corpse naked, tied a noose around its neck, and dragged it to an empty lot. As crowd members debated whether to ignite Mauchamp’s body with kerosene, soldiers loyal to the sultan’s brother and pretender to the throne confiscated the corpse and carried it to Mauchamp’s dispensary. French officials later found the body elaborately dressed in a Moroccan Muslim’s white qamis and jallaba, a turban covering the smashed head.

It is difficult to know exactly why soldiers dressed the body this way, but Ellen Amster plausibly interprets it as a “mock funeral” designed to convey a political message. In draping Mauchamp’s remains in Muslim garb, Amster writes, soldiers meant to symbolize the replacement of French authority with Moroccan sovereignty and thus to protest the growing encroachment of French administration, finance, technology, medicine, and culture. If available sources do not allow us precisely to establish the Moroccan soldiers’ motives, numerous accounts make the dominant French interpretation of it clear. Journalists depicted the ritual of stripping and reclothing as yet another savage indignity, one that symbolically deprived Mauchamp of his superior European identity.

The French press, especially the illustrated press, elaborately reported the incident, emphasizing the barbarism and savagery of the Muslim crowd. The front page of the Petit journal’s illustrated supplement shows a barely human horde of Arabs hurling paving stones at a young European man lying on the ground (fig. 20). Mauchamp bleeds from the head and his shirt is stained in red. He tries to get up, but the crowd seems almost on top of him. A particularly evil-looking man has drawn a dagger, set to strike a fatal blow. By 1907, images such as this had become stock features of a colonialist iconography that permeated the popular press. The Petit journal woodcut recalls George William Joy’s portrayal of Gordon’s murder at Khartoum in 1885. These pictures feature an innocent, unarmed European man, often in the foreground, mortally wounded by a huge crowd in Muslim garb. Hideous faces make these bloody assailants look like furies from hell. In Mauchamp’s case, as in Gordon’s, journalists depicted the European as a tragic hero martyred in service to the very natives to whom he had devoted his life. The lack of gratitude stood as a key theme in European representations of those they sought to colonize, a theme that served to justify further intervention and even wholesale conquest. Whether Arabs appreciated the effort or not, Europeans would ensure that they shed their primitive culture and beliefs.

The murder of Mauchamp, dramatized and sensationalized in the French press, moved the government to intervene. The French cabinet ordered Lyautet, headquartered just across the border in Algeria, to occupy the Moroccan city of Oujda, in the country’s northeastern corner. He would stay until the sultan paid France an indemnity for the doctor’s murder, dismissed the pasha of Marrakech, and arrested the guilty parties. The sultan had no choice but to comply. He was powerless to retaliate. Oujda militarily, as his own army operated with French advisers. And since Algiers, his government had become so dependent financially on France that he could not afford to alienate the decision makers in Paris. ‘Abd al-'Aziz’s unwillingness to confront the French seemed to confirm his apparent betrayal of Islam to the Christians and stripped him of what little legitimacy he had left. The result was a rebellion of such massive proportions that it ultimately led to ‘Aziz’s abdication and a large-scale French
intervention. Between 1905 and 1914, French forces became a regular presence in Morocco, fighting both with and against the Makhzan and placing the Moroccan question at the center of both foreign policy and public discussion.

Lyautey’s occupation of Oujda earned him a large measure of praise in the French press; although he had been mentioned frequently since the Entente Cordiale, he was now poised to become France’s latest colonial hero, taking up Brazza’s mantle as “conquérant pacifique.” Already in July 1906, eight months before the killing of Mauchamp, the Petit parisien had described Lyautey as a military leader capable of “punishing brigands, restoring stolen goods, and bringing dissidents to order—and all this without firing any shots.” This description was reminiscent of Brazza’s supposed ability to gain territory and native support “without spilling a drop of blood.” Lyautey’s method, wrote the Petit parisien’s Jean Frollo, was to marshal a large army for a “mission pacifique” designed to convince “les indigènes” that it would be futile to fight. “In making our power perpetually present,” Frollo declared, “we have dispensed with the need to use it.” Lyautey negotiated instead, “patiently but firmly,” until the Moroccans agreed to what the general had asked. This is “firmness without force,” a “pacific strength” that enabled the French to gain the Moroccans’ submission and respect, without causing any of the bitterness inherent in a traditional military campaign. The Petit parisien’s editors had doubtless read Lyautey articles and seen many of the letters sent to the general’s colonialist friends; they endorsed without reservation the so-called Gallieni method of colonization. Under Lyautey, they wrote, we have turned our southern Algerian military posts into “centers of civilization and defense all at once.”

Le journal used almost exactly the same formulas to describe Lyautey, calling him “a tactician as skillful as he was prudent; he is completely pacific . . . displaying our power so as to use it as little as possible.” The reality, of course, was that war reigned far more often than peace during the decade before 1914 and that persuasion did not always work. When it didn’t, or when tribal leaders promised to submit but kept fighting instead, Lyautey would bear down on them with deadly force. In doing so, Lyautey saw himself not as a traditional military conqueror intent on crushing his opponent but as an agent of political and social change. In his mind, military efforts served merely to punctuate a larger peaceful conquest, the fighting and bloodshed view as regrettable, if necessary, efforts to make “today’s adversary into the collaborator of tomorrow.” Moroccan “rebels” had been duped by a history they only dimly understood; Lyautey’s task was not to punish them for their plight but to enable them to escape from it. For this reason, he considered himself not mainly a soldier, though he had to be ready always to fight, but rather an administrator, architect, engineer, agronomist, and judge. Self-serving as such ideas appear, Lyautey seems to have believed them. He left no statements, either in his

Figure 29. The assassination of Doctor Mauchamp as depicted in Le petit journal, 7 April 1907.
published or unpublished correspondence, that suggest deception, except perhaps self-deception, on his part.\textsuperscript{54}

Although the \emph{Petit parisien} and \emph{Le Journal} articles quoted above appeared before Lyautey's occupation of Oujda, afterwards, he became an almost obsessive staple of journalistic concern. If the pictorial weekly \emph{L'Illustration} consecrated heroes and celebrities with its cover drawings and photographs, Lyautey earned that distinction for the first time on 13 April 1907, shortly after his military intervention to avenge Mauchamp. The cover shows the general touring the streets of the Moroccan city he has subdued. \emph{L'Illustration}'s caption emphasizes the "huge military apparatus" he commanded, but the magazine pictures him in wholly pacific pursuits. Another widely read pictorial weekly, \emph{Le Monde illustré}, pushed the pacific imagery even further. Before Lyautey's arrival, Oujda's "streets were filthy"; now "they will be swept regularly and kept perfectly clean." It is as if Lyautey's army was a brigade of street sweepers rather than a well-equipped fighting force; the image of peaceful conqueror seems to have fully sunk in. But it was a peacefulness backed by the threat of force, an "iron fist," as \emph{Le Figaro} put it, "sheathed in a velvet glove."\textsuperscript{55}

Lyautey seemed so appealing, so different from the Third Republic's typical military leaders, that journalists returned again and again to his looks, bearing, and style. The incessant attention to Lyautey's body betrays an effort to understand manhood in new and reassuring ways, to feature men both powerful and unthreatening all at once. Unlike the thick, crude, bourgeois demeanor of the typical officer, wrote the editor of \emph{Gil Blas}, Lyautey appeared "vigorous and refined." "He is tall and sharp, his svetle body proportioned harmoniously with his strong shoulders... . As a young man, he must have been very handsome. His allure is supple... . His head is round, unlike the squareness of typical military men... . and the roundness highlights, under the straight hair slightly tinted with silver... . the glow of his thoughts."\textsuperscript{56}

Here, \emph{Gil Blas} expresses in literary language what would become the standard description of Lyautey: vigorous energy in a svetle body capped by an elegant, thoughtful-looking halo of silver-white hair. This portrait distinguished Lyautey from the thick, square-headed, and pot-bellied politicians and generals typical of the Third Republic. The dashing white-haired general exuded a form of masculinity partly aristocratic in character, a masculinity consistent with the culture of honor and the duel so prominent in France of the Belle Epoque.\textsuperscript{57} That culture combined a bourgeois work ethic and belief in self-mastery with an aristocratic tradition of elegance.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Lyautey and "the Occupation of Oujda" (\emph{L'Illustration}, 13 April 1907).}
\end{figure}
can age. Lyautey’s motto could have applied to them both: “Display your
power so you don’t have to use it.”

It was this semi-aristocratic ethic of the duel that Lyautey, in particular,
seemed to represent. Lyautey’s svete form made him look like a fencer; and
he carried his sword wherever he went. He intended not to obliterate his
opponents but to convince them it was futile to fight. He would do so
partly through skillful negotiation and partly through his reputation for
power. Journalists focused on the general’s aristocratic manliness because
that cultural style seemed best suited for what was widely considered a dan-
gerous and delicate point in time. Having made peace with Great Britain,
France nonetheless faced the prospect of renewed conflict with Germany,
and this at a time when Russia seemed unable to help. To prepare for the
German threat, French men had to overcome the legacy of humiliation and
emasculaton they had suffered in 1870–71. But they had to do so without
becoming so aggressive as to prompt a preemptive German strike. The
culture and practice of dueling seemed ideal for this purpose because it
promoted a subtle form of masculine revival designed to enhance virility
while keeping naked aggression in check. Such images could be reassuring
to French men and women confronted with an assertive German neighbor,
a once and potential enemy whose population, economy, and army greatly
exceeded their French counterparts in strength. French commentators, and
doubtless the general public as well, wanted to believe that their superior
knowledge, skill, refinement, and self-discipline would compensate for
what many feared was a deficit of masculinity and virile force.

During the Belle Epoque, commentators widely agreed that virility, al-
ready wanting in 1871, had been further compromised by the feminizing ef-
fects of consumer society and of an economy in which machines dominated
men and so many sat behind counters or desks. The novelist and ardent na-
tionalist Maurice Barrès celebrated the mythic man who “strides through
the high grass with his rifle in his hand . . . enveloped on all sides by dan-
ger,” but worried about the omnipresence of bureaucratic “semimales.” Bar-
rès’s ideological nemesis Émile Zola agreed, lamenting that “virility is fading
away”; and the centrist Émile Faguet found it “revolting to see a [male]
colonel performing the passive task of a petty functionary.” If “there were
no longer any men,” as the writer F. A. Vuillernet maintained, it was because
they had been enervated and emasculated by a culture that paid too much
attention to their minds and too little to their bodies.

Dueling addressed this fin-de-siécle mind-body problem, echoing a time,
as the sociologist Gabriel Tarde put it, “when courage was everything and
said... to the softened and enervated man of our century; you must be brave. But important as the duel seemed to be, for a military man like Hubert Lyautey it could not by itself produce the manly energy essential to reviving a decadent France weakened by luxury, republicanism, and decades of European peace. The main source of a heightened virility lay not in metropolitan France but in the colonies abroad.

Lyautey had doubtless been influenced by Barrès, who called for "prophets of energy" to free his country from the egalitarian mediocrity and capitalist materialism of its republican regime. But the general's innovation was to find those prophets among the ordinary French men who served in the colonies. France's possessions in Indochina, Madagascar, the Sudan, and North Africa operated as "schools of virility," as Lyautey's confidant Alfred de Tardé would later put it, that trained the prophets of energy who would eventually return home and, Lyautey wrote, "wrest this country from decomposition and ruin." Colonialists would do so, the general added, "not by changing [France's] constitutional forms, a mundane and fleeting remedy, but by acting powerfully on its mores, on its inertia and its passivity." Those returning from their lessons in virility abroad would "regenerate" the homeland by "awakening" its "physical fertility," which would in turn "awaken its economic activity, commerce, and the entrepreneurial spirit." If French men had become unsexed and infertile thanks to the "atrophied state [of their country] where everything melts into the soothing ease of a material semi-well-being," colonialists would help restore them to a more masculine life. Those who had served abroad would "fertilize the homeland with a virile seed."

These passages from Lyautey's letters suggest an unintended irony. He had fled France partly to avoid marriage with a woman of childbearing age, a union that would have made him a father, still one of the essential characteristics of masculinity at that time. His own complicated sexuality and male identity may have moved him to find in the colonies a fertility and virility that his sexual orientation denied him in his personal life. "The reason I became a dedicated colonial officer," he wrote, "was because, above all, our colonial expansion enlarges that wonderful nursery of will and energy" essential to making any nation great. Thanks to his experience abroad, he could "give fertility" to France.

Among Lyautey's most faithful correspondents was Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, a diplomat, novelist, and Orientalist of noble lineage. In a letter to the vicomte, Lyautey responded to his friend's lamentation that the French were a "declining race" by telling him of the great potential their countrymen could realize if only they would be "liberated from [metropolitan] France, like a sword from its sheath." Here once again is the imagery of fencing and the duel, only it represents the manly energy released through colonial service abroad, rather than gentlemanly combat at home. If members of parliament could spend some time in Indochina, Lyautey wrote, they would see that France's colonies have begun to "educate a growing generation of strong young men, freed from routine and ready for bold and daring acts."

Lyautey's letter may have inspired Vogüé's 1890 novel Les Morts qui parlent, in which a young parliamentary deputy named Jacques Andarran travels to Senegal to visit his brother Pierre, who serves as an officer there. If European writers of the fin-de-siècle typically portrayed Africa as a land riddled with disease and debilitating heat, Andarran characterized it as the source of vitality and good health. "Who calls it unhealthy and feverous, that Senegalese air? Jacques found it restorative." He had left behind in Paris the "pernicious fevers" of the Palais Bourbon, that cesspool of disgust where only "the dead speak," moulding a "vain prattle," their "faces pinched, darb, hateful, and full of deceit." Africa may have been a nightmarish hell for Joseph Conrad and Félicien Challaye, but for Vogüé it was the place where the nightmare of parliament and republican impotence vanished into air. There was nothing inherently wrong with members of the Chamber of Deputies; the institution held the blame. They would be cured if, like their countrymen in Senegal or Sudan, they could become "good students of virile work," laboring in the "school of action and responsibility" that the colonies represented.

While in Africa, Jacques tells his brother and their comrades that, for his parliamentary colleagues, the goal of colonial expansion was the "mis en valeur," or economic exploitation, of the territories in question. Pierre responds that he neither expects nor seeks any material benefits from his colonial efforts. His objective was the creation of new men, the formation of "the cadres of our national regeneration." Africa was the land, as Vogüé would put it in a later novel, from which France would "renew its spent energies." When these forceful colonial men took charge of the metropolitan army, they would "make our European adversaries think twice" before trying to push the French around. Later in Les Morts qui parlent, Pierre, wounded, returns home. Marie, who loves him, urges him to remain with her but worries that Pierre has...
another love, the love of Africa, and that the continent’s hold on him as “a man of action” is more powerful than hers. Marie is fiercely jealous of this Africa, her competitor in love. But despite her misery over the thought of losing Pierre again, “she instinctively loves in him this proof of male energy.”

The colonies had made Pierre so viscerally male as to allow him to capture his beloved at an elemental, instinctive level, despite her fear that he would leave her behind. Vogüé’s ideas, which echoed those of Lyautey, were consonant with the focus on heroes, heroism, and virility common in both fin-de-siècle France and late Victorian Britain.

Lyautey’s reputation as a pacific conqueror, a lithe duelist on the colonial stage, received another boost in December 1908 when the general’s forces defeated the Beni Snassen tribal army in its mountainous homeland in northeastern Morocco. The Berber tribe had risen in rebellion against the French forces based in Oujda, and after a month of inconclusive fighting, the Beni Snassen withdrew into their mountain redoubt. They planned to remain there until the French either left the region or let down their guard. Lyautey responded by turning their geographic position against them. Rather than invade their natural fortress, which would have placed French troops at a massive disadvantage, the general built a ring of military posts around the base of the mountains. This strategy cut the Beni Snassen’s supply routes, preventing them from replenishing their dwindling stocks of food and ammunition. When these supplies ran out, tribal leaders sued for peace.

Since Lyautey won this battle more through economic warfare than by taking a large number of Moroccan (or French) lives, journalists covering the campaign dubbed it yet another example of Lyautey’s humane, pacific approach. “In just a few days with a small number of men,” wrote a journalist for Le Gaulois, “General Lyautey won the complete submission of rebel tribes without causing [human] losses.” He earned loyalty from his soldiers and submission from Moroccans, added Le Figaro’s Jean Dautel, for one and the same reason: as Lyautey himself put it, “The art of command must be a labor of love.” Here was a manly man, whose best weapon was the art of love. Such an idea likely reassured French men and women of moderate and liberal temper who, since the Dreyfus Affair, had been wary of traditional military leaders. Ordinary citizens wanted to spread French civilization, and nothing could be more comforting than the notion of doing so in peace.

Still, if Lyautey subdued the Beni Snassen with a minimum of bloodshed, such was the exception rather than the rule in Morocco between 1907 and 1914. Lyautey’s fellow generals would prove extremely, even gratuitously, brutal in their campaigns against “rebels” Moroccan fighters, and Lyautey himself would soon find that violence alone succeeded in overcoming their resistance. But despite this bloody reality, Lyautey’s reputation as a peaceful conqueror would hold firm in France throughout the entire period and beyond. He established his peaceful bona fides early on, and that reputation would stick. An army, Lyautey wrote, was not just a fighting force but an organization on the march, “using diplomacy, intelligence, and economic incentives to minimize the amount of violence necessary to acquire territory abroad.” These ideas allowed Lyautey to rationalize in his own mind the bloodshed of colonial conquest and to make an especially convincing case to French journalists, themselves eager to see colonialism as “a labor of love.”

If most commentators transmitted the message Lyautey sought to impart, contributing to the growing mythology surrounding him, there were nonetheless a few dissenters on the political extremes. For the left-wing Les Hommes du jour, the general was a master of public relations, a brilliant manipulator who “by his tact, his savoir-faire, and his subtlety... succeeded in making the entire [mass-circulation ‘bourgeois press’] dance to his tune.” Unlike Gallieni, who wrote one weighty colonial tome after the other and influenced no one, Lyautey gave himself “a halo of generosity and humanitarianism” by placing a couple of short, cleverly-written articles in prestigious journals. Beyond this, he handled gullible journalists with impressive, if diabolical, skill.

On the extreme right, Edouard Drumont agreed that Lyautey was a pacific conqueror but predicted—correctly as it turned out—that Morocco would become bloody. “All of our hesitations and our pacific procedures,” Drumont’s correspondent wrote, “will be interpreted as retreats by these tribes, against which force alone can succeed.” French pacifism would thus encourage the Arabs to fight harder, and before long the murderers and assassins of today would reach their “natural, logical, and fatal denouement: a mass uprising of the whole of Morocco, a Muslim crusade against the Roumis [Christians], a holy war by the sons of the Prophet.” France would have no choice, Drumont added, but to intervene with force, leaving in Morocco “the bones of twenty or thirty thousand French soldiers.”

Although the right-wing agitator overestimated
the death toll, he proved generally accurate about the large-scale rebellion.

Soon to erupt.

Lyauté’s “peaceful” occupation of Oujda in April 1907, successful as it seemed at the time, became the last straw for tribal leaders and other Moroccan elites. France not only had seized control of Morocco’s economy but had subjected the Makhzan to tight political oversight and now had brazenly occupied a Moroccan city. French troops would soon capture a second town, after nine Europeans, including three French citizens, were murdered in Casablanca on 30 July. Those who attacked the nine Europeans accused them of desecrating a Muslim cemetery. The French press, especially the mass-circulation dailies, splashed pictures and reports of the murders on the front pages. These killings, coming so soon after the highly publicized murder of Mauchamp, produced great outrage in France, whose government hastened to intervene. It did so with extraordinary clumsiness, triggering massive rioting and looting throughout Casablanca, especially in the Jewish quarter, where perhaps one hundred people were cut down and an equal number of girls abducted. In response, French gunboats bombarded the city, killing hundreds more, flattening buildings and making streets impassable. A corps of twelve hundred tirailleurs sénégalais and foreign legionnaires commanded by General Drude eventually came ashore and occupied the city.91

The huge French military presence triggered a powerful uprising among the tribes around Casablanca, which amassed some 10,000 men to face Drude’s army. The French government, unprepared to endure large-scale fighting in Morocco and fearing a hostile European reaction, forbade the general to move inland from the city. This reticence encouraged the Moroccan rebellion, which in turn moved the sultan to send his own army into the area. ‘Aziz worried that the Casablanca rebellion would play into the hands of his half-brother ‘Abd al-Hafiz, who wanted to replace him as ruler of the country. Under these circumstances, the sitting sultan found himself with no good alternatives. If he did nothing, and rebellious tribes succeeded in ejecting the French from Casablanca, he would seem weak while allowing his brother, who supported the tribes, to look strong. But if the sultan’s troops intervened in Casablanca, he would be accused of siding with the Roumi occupiers against his own people.

Even before the French landing in Casablanca, powerful local leaders such as Madani el Glaoui had begun to argue that ‘Aziz had betrayed religion and country and should be deposed. Since the sultan was at once the country’s political and spiritual leader, the position could not be abolished or left vacant. There had to be a new sultan, one who could claim a legitimate hold on the throne. Glauoi endorsed ‘Abd al-Hafiz’s claim to the throne, effectively giving the country a second ruler.92 The mutual antagonism of the rival brothers would launch Morocco into a civil war, placing the French in an exceedingly awkward position. They were now fighting alongside a sultan who had lost much of his legitimacy and power. Any victories for French forces or for ‘Aziz alienated Hafiz’s followers all the more, making France’s quest to rule Morocco indirectly through its sultan more elusive than ever.

Part jihad, part national rebellion, part anticolonial struggle, and part agrarian uprising, ‘Abd al-Hafiz’s “Hafiziyat” movement radicalized much of Morocco and made it clear that broad sectors of the elite and population at large wanted nothing to do with France. The movement became so powerful that on 21 August 1908, ‘Aziz abdicated and Hafiz became the new sultan.93 This transfer of power did nothing, however, to lighten the load of Morocco’s dependency on France. With the Makhzan heavily in debt, Hafiz could hardly shrug off French political and financial control. In submitting to it, he guaranteed that many of the social forces that had mobilized against his brother would soon rise against him. To confront this challenge, the French would have to abandon all pretense of a penetration pacifique; Lyauté would find himself charged with suppressing a holy war.

Lyauté retained his command on the border of Algeria and Morocco until the end of 1910, when he was named chief officer of the Tenth Army Corps at Rennes. Between the abdication of ‘Aziz and his departure for France, Lyauté had established French control over the eastern third of Morocco and heightened the interest of French journalists who continued to portray him as a peaceful conqueror, despite his often-violent military campaigns. On 18 April 1908, L’Illustration pictured him on its cover for the second time, as he respectfully “received” the quid (governor) of Mediouna. A year later, the magazine lauded Lyauté’s “passive” success in organizing thriving markets in once rebellious provinces “without incident and without a single gunshot being fired.” As a result, “the pacific penetration . . . of this vast region has [been] quickly assured,” and local tribes now benefited from a “French peace . . . pursued and realized by General Lyauté.”94 The same was supposedly true of the Chaouia region, where, the Petit Parisien’s correspondent observed, “respect for the natives has been scrupulous beyond anything we have seen before.” These overly
rosy stories, with their happy, peaceful endings, glossed over a series of bloody battles between 10,000 tribal fighters and French troops during the two previous years.96

Thanks to such journalistic accounts, Lyauty assumed his command in Rennes surrounded by a halo of journalistic admiration equalled by no other military leader of the time. "His campaigns [in Morocco]," wrote his future collaborator Wladimir d'Ormesson, "have made him famous. He was considered one of the most brilliant commanders of the army, not only for his military talents, for the extraordinary authority that emanates from him, but also because of his reputation as a deeply cultured man, an artist and patron of the arts," Lyauty, added Ormesson, basked "in a kind of legend."97 At this time, Lyauty began to think of himself as the general destined to lead France's looming war effort against Germany and as the man who would save his country from a new and devastating defeat.98

At it turned out, war between France and Germany nearly broke out in July 1911, when the kaiser sent his gunboat Panther to Agadir to protest an unprecedented French military penetration of Morocco's interior. In France, mainstream opinion viewed this latest German challenge as a grievous affront, while nationalists demanded blood—as did their counterparts across the Rhine. In the end, the two governments resolved their differences peacefully, postponing war for a few more years. The Germans acquiesced to a French protectorate over Morocco in exchange for a sliver of land from the Congo.99 At long last, French colonialists had achieved their most cherished goal: Morocco now belonged to them. The sultan agreed to allow French forces to occupy any part of the country their leaders deemed necessary and to give France essentially complete control of his country's international relations and foreign trade. To enforce these provisions, a new treaty officially made Morocco a French protectorate and stipulated that France would be represented in Morocco by a "resident general" who would hold effective power there, serving at once as the sultan's prime minister and foreign minister.100

Once word of the protectorate treaty leaked out, Moroccan unrest erupted once again. It boiled over when French officials attempted to re-shape the Makhzen's army along metropolitan lines. Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré's objective in doing so was to use Moroccan soldiers to complete the conquest of their country, thus sparing French manpower for the impending war against Germany. The military reorganization seemed humiliating to the Moroccans, who now had to take orders in French, follow what to them were alien military procedures, and worst of all, receive part of their pay in kind, which deprived them of cash needed to support their wives and children. The soldiers' protests quickly developed into a mutiny that targeted French military instructors, several of whom were killed. Soldiers then turned their rage against European residents of Fez, shooting people at random, looting stores, and burning houses. The mutineers, now with hundreds of townspeople behind them, turned on Fez's Jewish quarter, the mellah, where Moroccan rioters usually ended up. The fighting lasted nearly three days (17–19 April); in the end, fifty-three French soldiers lay dead along with thirteen European civilians. The Jewish quarter was burnt to the ground, leaving ten thousand people homeless. Perhaps six hundred Moroccans lost their lives.101

The sultan proved powerless to stop the violence—he had, in fact, helped spark it by signing the protectorate agreement and giving his country to the infidel. Hafiz then nixed its flames by appearing to turn against the French and side with the rebels. In any event, the French, now in charge of Morocco, faced a full-scale insurrection. They needed an experienced military man to take charge, and Lyauty was waiting in the wings. Thanks in part to pressure from Etienne and the Comité du Maroc, Poincaré named Lyauty resident-general of Morocco—after he assured government leaders that he would subdue the rebellion as peacefully as possible.102

The French press lauded Lyauty's appointment, announced on 28 April 1912, with near unanimity. The only other times the country's commentators had responded to a French colonial personality with so little dissent had been when Brazza sought ratification of his Makoko treaty and when Marchand returned home from Fashoda. In Lyauty's case, we have evidence in his voluminous correspondence that broad swathes of the French public endorsed his selection as well.

Lyauty's most ardent journalistic support had long come from Le Temps, the austere, influential newspaper read by France's political elite. Dozens of Parisian and provincial papers reprinted or excerpted its articles nearly every day, especially those on foreign policy. For that reason, Le Temps enjoyed a degree of influence far beyond its relatively modest circulation (45,000 in 1912). The paper's leading writers and editors belonged to the colonial lobby, and, early on, Lyauty had convinced its main foreign affairs correspondent, André Tardieu, to endorse his method of colonial expansion.103 Tardieu, a brilliant néerlandais (graduate of France's most selective school) who led a double life as journalist and high civil servant, had urged Poincaré to name Lyauty resident-general. When he did, Le Temps elaborately praised the decision, asserting, "The designation of General Lyauty as resident general
has been received with a unanimous satisfaction. . . . He is the only man in France who has already done in Morocco exactly what he is now being asked to do,” namely, to be “at once a soldier and an administrator.”

Virtually every major newspaper agreed, reminding readers of Lyauty’s “self-assured command,” his pacific conquest of the Beni Snassen, and his refusal to found “an empire through force alone.” Once again, commentators admired the general’s distinctive looks and youthful, energetic allure, the “thin, well-proportioned body with tense military legs.” A writer for the popular weekly La Vie claimed that even the Arabs worship him, too. When asked what he thought of Lyauty, a Moroccan soldier supposedly spread his arms and cried: “Allah!Mohammed!Lyauty!”

Taken together, these articles and many more like them reached tens of millions of French readers. But how can we gauge their effect? We know from Lyauty’s correspondence that long before his appointment as resident-general, his views had deeply influenced members of France’s social and political elite, especially those of wealth and conservative values. Lyauty corresponded with more than a thousand people, and because his epistolary partners circulated the letters among friends and acquaintances, it is likely that five thousand—perhaps even ten thousand individuals—had read one or more of his letters. Since many of these people wrote back expressing admiration and support for his ideas and his work, we have good evidence that, within this large circle of correspondents at least, Lyauty’s views about Morocco in particular and empire in general had sunk in. For these individuals, articles in the press likely confirmed ideas they already held, creating even stronger commitments to Lyauty and to the form of colonialism he represented.

The press proved especially influential among the general’s correspondents because it reinforced a “private” relationship often too distant to stand on its own. Lyauty’s long absences from France and the sheer impossibility of seeing so many people meant that in most cases he had little or no face-to-face relationship with the vast majority of those he wrote. And because the general could not communicate with each of his epistolary partners very often, most had to rely on the press for information about him. He was thus more a celebrity to them than a friend, more a distant public figure than an element of everyday life. But these correspondents possessed more than an ordinary fan’s relationship with Lyauty. They formed, rather, a kind of elite fan club, all the more devoted to him and his ideas thanks to the letters they occasionally received.

Even some of Lyauty’s family members related to him mainly in his role as a public persona. When Lyauty was named resident-general, a cousin wrote to say he had heard about it from the press, as did a great many who considered themselves his friends—including the rare individuals who addressed him with the familiar tu. As one wrote, “Je lis ta nomination dans la presse.” One particularly interesting set of reactions came from Max Lazard, the social reformer and scion of a top French banking family. Lazard enjoyed an epistolary relationship with Lyauty that extended over more than thirty years, though he saw him only rarely. In one early letter, Max writes: “If you have the time to respond, I hope you will talk to me about yourself for as long as I talk about myself. I hear about you only from the articles in newspapers, where you’re cited very often.” Lazard adds that “would be happy to talk with you about the work of colonization that men like you can make so appealing and so attractive.” The combination of regular newspaper articles and the infrequent but intimate letters attached the young Max Lazard to Lyauty and made the then-colonel his hero. In an eight-page letter to Lyauty, Max’s mother confirmed as much, telling him of her son’s “complete admiration and affection for you.” She confesses her own admiration as well, especially for Lyauty’s colonial oeuvre. “Thanks to Mme Berenger, I was able to read a few of your extremely vivid letters [emphasis in original] . . . I would have wanted all those interested in our colonies and in the grandeur of France to read them.” In Madame Lazard’s letter we see the influence of Lyauty’s missives beyond those to whom they were addressed.

For all that Lyauty carried favor with influential men, he did not neglect the obscure. He made a point of flattering and reinforcing unknown writers when they expressed ideas similar to his. Such individuals regularly joined the ranks of Lyauty’s fans. Take Gaston Deschamps, a minor journalist who published articles here and there. After the general wrote Deschamps praising one of his pieces, the journalist responded in laudatory tones. He called Lyauty “the brilliant general who has served France so well,” a man “well-known to each and every Frenchman.” Although “serious” journalists like Le Temps’ Tardieu wrote at length about foreign policy and colonial theory, the mass press did not limit itself to Lyauty’s ideas and actions. As we have seen, popular journalists described—often elaborately—his looks, dress, mannerisms, idiosyncrasies, and the like. In doing so, the mass media of the era once again fostered an “intimacy at a distance,” a familiarity gained without any direct interaction with the individual in question.
The French National Archives contain vivid evidence of the role such “intimacy at a distance” played in making Lyauty a popular hero and celebrity and in attaching large numbers of French men and women to the colonial ideas and images he seemed to represent. Lyauty received hundreds, perhaps thousands, of letters congratulating him on his nomination as resident-general of Morocco in April 1912. The majority of these letters came from people who knew him only distantly or not at all. This correspondence provides evidence not only of Lyauty’s popularity but also of a widespread support for the Moroccan conquest he had come to represent. It also reveals the importance he had assumed in the mental worlds of a great many French women and men.

Several people wrote asking Lyauty to take them—or their sons—to Morocco with him, and others expressed regret that they could not join his efforts. As one writer put it, “The task to accomplish is so elevated, so important to our country, that all those unable to accompany you must suffer a broken heart.” In any event, “the hearts of all Frenchmen accompany you to Morocco and God is on your side.” The writer, who hadn’t seen Lyauty in many years, expressed the disappointment that can result from intimacy at a distance: “I would have been very happy to talk with you about this for a few minutes.”

Echoing the mass press, a great many of Lyauty’s correspondents claimed that “the whole of France” or “all Frenchmen” rejoiced in his nomination as resident-general and that in naming him to this post, the government was only responding to the popular will. As one put it, “for once, public opinion will be unanimous in ratifying your choice [as head of Morocco].” The word “patriotic” appears over and over again in these letters, as numerous writers identified the conquest and control of Morocco as one of France’s most cherished interests, both in terms of its civilization mission and as the bulwark against German expansion. “You will know how to make sure the flag of our Fatherland is respected and to show that a strong nation knows how to avenge the affronts it has suffered.”

Because Lyauty’s appointment as proconsul of Morocco made him one of France’s most important and visible people, many letter writers saw him as a celebrity and themselves as fans. Several correspondents asked for his autograph, some enclosing a special card for that purpose. A great many others revealed an intense emotional connection to the celebrity Lyauty and a personal, if vicarious, involvement in his deeds: “When this morning’s newspapers brought me, deep in my provincial backwater, the news of your great [new] dignity . . . I felt not just a joy but a profound sense of relief.” For another correspondent, the emotional connection with Lyauty was such that “I will follow you, in my thoughts, along the path you have chosen. The path will be littered with obstacles, but it will take you into the realm of glory.”

For these writers, Lyauty was not just a celebrity but a hero as well. Like the other anointed heroes of the Belle Époque, Lyauty seemed to reproduce the greatness of ancient myth, offering guidance, protection, and inspiration in this prewar era of uncertainty and unease. His Moroccan quest made him an “indispensable man,” a “necessary man,” an “indispensable leader,” the “man of all men of energy and courage,” the “only man capable of solving the grave Moroccan problem.” For one writer, Lyauty’s heroism recalled “the aura of Bonaparte on the eve of his conquest of Egypt.” “Without a doubt,” wrote another, “the prestige of your name alone, a name that means loyalty, courage, protection for the humble . . . will attract the [rebellious] natives to you and make them your servants.” They would, in other words, submit to Lyauty’s conquête pacifique.

Many correspondents expressed dissatisfaction with the state of their country, but in Lyauty, they found hope for the future: “Your nomination is, in itself, the best proof of the restoration of our national sentiment, and nothing else could bring more joy and hope to our fighting men.” Such writers, and many others, believed the new resident-general would restore the national honor by bringing order and discipline to the colonies. “You and you alone have the strength to undo the chaos and to establish, step by step, a French peace.” In Lyauty, national and imperial sentiments came together, making him a French hero of overwhelming importance on the eve of 1914.

The ideas and emotions expressed in these letters to Lyauty announced what Daniel Rivet, the best historian of this period, has called a “Morocco Mania.” During a period of nationalist revival and looming fears of war, French men and women were comforted by the “heroic” victories over Moroccan “rebels” and especially by the emergence of a potential savior in Lyauty. The elegant, aristocratic general—the manly, though pacific, conqueror—appealed to an unusually broad sector of the French population: nationalists who saw him as a Barrèsian “professor of energy,” republicans who believed in the civilizing mission and the peaceful extension of French power; even socialists for whom Lyauty seemed the least of evils among generals who might be sent to Fez.

Such generalized support underlay Lyauty’s emergence as a colonial hero in the years before the First World War. It enabled him to embody in
his person not just the French presence in Morocco but the essential qualities of Frenchness itself. When Lyautey was elected to the Academie Française in October 1912, journalists framed this honor as evidence of his ability to incarnate the nation as a whole. "At pivotal moments," wrote the editors of La Liberté, "certain names appear before us. All at once everyone finds himself drawn to these names, and we all come together in a kind of national fervor. Today, that name is Lyautey." Because the académie represented not just the country's intellectual life but its most essential spirit, "it wanted to acclaim as resoundingly as possible the man who, at this moment, best honors the fatherland…. What France loves above all in Lyautey is France itself."

At a time of mounting tension with Germany, nothing proved more encouraging to the French public than newspaper tales of brave, triumphant fighters lead by a resident-general whose toughness and resolution were tempered by intelligence, finesse, and a zeal for French civilization. If Lyautey could defeat Moroccan barbarism with the promise of a humane, French peace, there was reason for confidence that other French generals—or perhaps Lyautey himself—would overcome German barbarism as well. "France has recognized Lyautey," wrote the Petit journal, "and Germany has noted it."

In 1899 the image of Jean-Baptiste Marchand had helped French men and women recover from the national disasters of Fashoda and the Dreyfus Affair; now the apparent heroism of Lyautey would steel them for the new trials to come.

Epilogue

STANLEY, BRAZZA, GORDON, MARCHAND, AND LYAUTEY—five men who became charismatic heroes and exemplars of empire—resonated in their countries after the end of their African careers, and in some cases even, or especially, after their deaths. For most of the five, charisma gave way to celebrity and fame, as they no longer exercised authority in a Weberian sense. In Stanley’s case, for example, the excess violence associated with his expeditions deprived him of charismatic authority—his ability to inspire people to imitation and action—but not his celebrity status. And in the long run, his fame has endured. The word “fame” comes from the Greek and Latin “to speak” and applies to those “much talked about.” Stanley’s fame has lasted not just because everyone knows the greeting “Dr. Livingstone, I presume!” but because an endless stream of biographies and other writings have kept his memory—and thus his fame—alive.

Although the five men played comparable roles, there were important differences among them. Gordon stood out as the sole religious hero of the group, though Brazza and Marchand joined him in appearing to marry themselves to the imperial cause. Like Gordon, Brazza died in Africa in a brave but futile effort to achieve his goals. But the purposes and implications of the two final missions differed significantly. Gordon was sent to extricate British subjects and dependents trapped by an anticolonial rebellion. The long-term outcome of his intervention served to extend British