

The Anachronism of International Pre-Colonial Loan Burdens and Intensive occupation of Tunisian Territory as a Colonial Yoke of France under 23 Appointed Diplomatic Agents of Exploration, Expropriation and Exploitation (3Es) 1863-1956

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Abstract: This paper brings out evidences of unscrupulous pre-colonial debts burden of Tunisia owing to foreign companies and governments and how it acted as a motivated factor among others to intensive occupation and colonization of the territory which was never the case in other pre-colonial and colonial sphere of influences in North Africa as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa. The then Great Powers of the World especially Britain and Germany who strictly carved the African Continent the way they wanted supported the French motives against the non-payment of loans incurred by the Bey Government during the mid-19th Century. Therefore, the implantations of the French imperialist actors were imminent and could only recover their finances through the effectiveness of the 3Es. This makes the history of Tunisia very interesting because it stands as a very special case study in which the colonization of the country was as a result of corruption, embezzlement of the borrow funds for internal developmental projects which were neither completed with the required borrowed sum nor refunded to the lenders. This is part of the African history which has been hidden and hardly seen in most history books as researchers at times generalized the colonization of North African countries like Morocco and Algerian. Therefore, the French colonialist were not to be blamed because the Tunisian Ministers been unable to manage the funds borrowed exposed their country to suffer the consequences of colonialism from 1863 to 1956 when the country finally gained independence from France and became a full member of the United Nations Organisation created in the aftermath of the Second World War of 1939-145. The scrutiny of documentaries, specialized sources and related studies enable us to use a historical analytical and narrative approaches with our findings bringing out the 23 agents of 3 Es. It should be noted here that the history of Tunisia is very interesting because it faced many different pre- colonizations spanning from the Phoenicians as early as the 12th Century B.C, the Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, various Arab and Berber Kingdoms and the Ottomans from the 16th to late 19th Centuries which finally ended up in the colonial armpit of the French with changing portfolios of the appointed French citizens to play the games of effective imperialism of the highest order.

Keywords: Loan, Burden, Diplomatic Agents, Exploitation, colonial yoke, corruption, embezzlement, independence.

INTRODUCTION

Tunisia is a country in Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, having a western border with Algeria (965 km) and south-eastern border with Libya (459 km) where the width of land tapers to the south-west into the Sahara. The country has north, east and complex east-to-north coasts including the curved Gulf of Gabès, which forms the western part of Africa's Gulf of Sidra. Most of this greater gulf forms the main coast of Libya including the city of Sirte which shares its root name. The country's geographic coordinates are 34°00'N 9°00'E. Tunisia occupies an area of 163,610 square kilometers, of which 8,250 are

water. The principal and reliable rivers rise in the north of the country with a few notable exceptions from north-east Algeria and flow through the northern plain where sufficient rainfall supports diverse plant cover and irrigated agriculture. Tunisia is on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa, midway between the Atlantic Ocean and the Nile Delta. It is bordered by Algeria on the west and Libya on the south east (Guellouz *et al.*, 2010). It lies between latitudes 30° and 38°N, and longitudes 7° and 12°E. An abrupt southward turn of the Mediterranean coast in northern Tunisia gives the country two distinctive Mediterranean coasts, west-east in the north, and north-south in the east

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(Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia Geography of Tunisia).

In the Maghreb, the first written records describing the Berbers began with the Tunisian region, proximate to the founding there of Carthage. Tunisia remained the leading region of the Berber peoples throughout the period of the Punic, Roman and into the Islamic (Balout, 1989) According to Greek legend, Princess Dido, of Tyre, was the first outsider to settle among the native tribes of what is now Tunisia when she founded the city of Carthage in the 9th Century BC (Trump, 1980). Although the story is certainly apocryphal, Carthage nonetheless grew into one of the great cities and preeminent powers of antiquity and its colonies and entrepôts were scattered throughout the Western Mediterranean region. Thereafter, Carthage fought a series of wars with its rival, Rome. Rome prevailed in the mid-2nd Century BC, razed Carthage, and ruled the region for the following 500 years. In the 7th Century, Arab conquerors converted the native Berber of Amazigh population of North Africa to Islam. The area was ruled by a succession of Islamic dynasties and empires until coming under French pre- colonial and colonial rule in the late 19th Century (Gabriele Montalbano, May 16, 2023).

As the population of Tunisia is essentially Arab Berber. Throughout the centuries Tunisia has received various waves of immigration that have included Phoenicians, sub-Saharan Africans, Jews, Romans, Vandals, and Arabs. The Muslim refugees from Sicily settled in Al-Sāhīl after their homeland was captured by the Normans in 1091. The most notable immigration was that of the Spanish Moors (Muslims), which began after the fall of Sevilla (Seville), Spain, as a result of the Reconquista in 1248 and which turned into a veritable exodus in the early 17th Century. As a result, some 200,000 Spanish Muslims settled in the area of Tunis, in the Majardah valley, and on the Sharik Peninsula in the north, bringing with them their urban culture and more advanced agricultural and irrigation techniques. Finally, from the 16th to 19th Centuries, the Ottomans brought their own blend of Asian and European traditions with great ethnic diversity seen in the variety of Tunisian family names (Guellouz *et al.*, 2010).

Modern Tunisians are the descendants of indigenous Berbers and of people from numerous civilizations that have invaded, migrated to, and been assimilated into the population over the millennia. Recorded history in Tunisia begins with the arrival of Phoenicians, who founded Carthage and other North African settlements in the 8th century B.C. Carthage became a major sea power, clashing with Rome for control of the Mediterranean until it was defeated and captured by the Romans in 146 B.C (Alistair Boddy-Evans, January 31, 2020 A Brief History of Tunisi). The Romans ruled and settled in North Africa until the 5th century, when the

Roman Empire fell and Tunisia was invaded by European tribes, including the Vandals. The Muslim conquest in the 7th century transformed Tunisia and the make-up of its population, with subsequent Muslims and Jews at the end of the 15th century. Tunisia became a center of Arab culture waves of migration from around the Arab and Ottoman world, including significant numbers of Spanish and learning and was assimilated into the Turkish Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. It was a French protectorate from 1881 until independence in 1956 and retains close political, economic, and cultural ties with France. Tunisia's independence from France in 1956 ended the protectorate established in 1881.

President Habib Ali Bourguiba, who had been the leader of the independence movement, declared Tunisia a republic in 1957, ending the nominal rule of the Ottoman Beys. As the 19th Century commenced, the Husaynid dynasty Bey remained the hereditary ruler the country. Since the early 18th Century Tunisia had been effectively autonomous, although still 'officially' an Ottoman province. Commerce and trade with Europe increased dramatically following the Napoleonic wars. Western merchants especially Italians arrived to establish businesses in the major cities. Italian farmers, tradesmen, and laborers also immigrated to Tunisia. With the rapid surge in contacts with Europe, foreign influence grew. During the rule of Ahmad Bey (r.1837-1855) extensive modern reforms were initiated. Later, in 1861 Tunisia promulgated the first constitution in the Arab world (Gabriele Montalbano, 2020). Yet the Tunisian drive toward modernizing the state and the economy met resistance. Reformers became frustrated by comfort-seeking insiders, political disorganization, regional discontent, and rural poverty. An 1864 revolt in the *Sahil* region was brutally put down. Later, after ineffective measures had failed, the leading reformer Khair al-Din (Khaïreddine) became chief minister 1873–1877, but he too eventually met defeat by wily conservative politicians. European banks advanced funds to the Beylical government for modernizing projects, such as civil improvements, the military, public works, and development projects, but also they included money for the personal use of the Bey. The loans were frequently negotiated at unfavorable rates and terms. Repayment of this foreign debt (Gabriele Montalbano, 2020).

Tunisia had been a province of the Ottoman Empire since the Conquest of Tunis (1574), although with great autonomy under the authority of a Bey. In 1770, Brigadier Rafélis de Broves bombarded the cities of Bizerte, Porto Farina and Monastir in retaliation for acts of piracy.^[2] In the 19th century Tunisian commercial contacts with Europe were numerous, and there was a population of French, Italian and British expatriates in the country, that represented by Consulates. France had also made a major loan to Tunisia in the mid-19th century. The Tunisian government was weak, with an

inefficient tax system that only brought it one-fifth of the tax collected. The economy was crippled with a series of droughts and the elimination of corsairs by Western fleets (Balout, 1989). Lastly, Tunisians had little control on foreign trade as ancient 16th century agreements with European powers limited custom taxes to 3%. As a result, its small industry was devastated by imports, especially in the area of textiles. Following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, France's international prestige was severely damaged, and both Italy and the United Kingdom attempted to reinforce their influence in Tunisia (Roberts, Stephen 1929). The Italian representative failed through clumsiness, but the British representative Richard Wood was more successful. In order to limit French influence, Wood obtained the reinstatement of Tunisia as a province of the Ottoman Empire in 1871, although the region's autonomy was also guaranteed. Great Britain continued to try to exert influence through commercial ventures, but these were not successful. There were also various Tunisian land ownership disputes among France, Britain and Italy. The French wished to take control of Tunisia, which neighbored their existing colony of Algeria, and to suppress Italian and British influence there. At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, a diplomatic arrangement was made for France to take over Tunisia while Great Britain obtained control of Cyprus from the Ottomans. Subsequently, the use of Tunisian territory as a sanctuary by rebel Khroumir bands gave a pretext for the military intervention (Gabriele Montalbano, May 2020). On 28 April 1881, 28,000 men under General Forgemol de Bostquénard entered Tunisia. On 1 May, the city of Bizerte surrendered to the 8,000 men of Jules Aimé Bréart [fr], who then continued to Tunis. Bréart entered Tunis between May 3 and May 6, 1881. He had in his possession the Bardo Treaty establishing a protectorate on Tunisia, which had just been cabled to him by the French government. On May 11, Bréart, the general consul Théodore Roustan, and General Pierre Léon Mauraud, accompanied by an armed escort, presented the treaty to Muhammad III as-Sadiq (Sadok Bey), Bey of Tunis between 1859 and 1881, who resided in Ksar Saïd. Surprised, Sadok Bey requested several hours for reflection, and immediately gathered his cabinet. Some of its members insisted that the bey should escape towards Kairouan to organize resistance, but Sadok Bey decided to accept the protectorate. The Bardo Treaty was signed by both parties on 12 May 1881 (Aldrich, Robert, 15 September 1996).

Tunisia became a protectorate of France by treaty rather than by outright conquest, as was the case in Algeria. Officially, the bey remained an absolute monarch: Tunisian ministers were still appointed, the government structure was preserved, and Tunisians continued to be subjects of the bey. The French did not confiscate land, convert mosques into churches, or change the official language. Nevertheless, supreme authority was passed to the French resident general. Under French guidance, Tunisia's finances were soon

stabilized and modern communications established (Marx Karl, 1867). Though France never overtly seized land or displaced the population, both of which had occurred in Algeria, the most fertile portions of northern Tunisia, comprising the Majardah valley and the Sharik Peninsula, were passed on to other European countries. Valuable phosphate mines began operating near Gafsa in the south, and vegetables were cultivated and exported from the Majardah valley after French and Italian colonists had become established there. By the 1890s a small French-educated group—the members of which came to be called “Young Tunisians”—began pushing for both modernizing reforms based on a European model and greater participation by Tunisians in their own government (Aldrich Robert, 1996).

The group's conduct during the protectorate, however, was cautious and reserved. Their major weapon became the newspaper *Le Tunisien*, a French-language publication founded in 1907. With the printing of an Arabic edition in 1909, the Young Tunisians simultaneously educated their compatriots and persuaded the more liberal French to help move Tunisia toward modernity. Even this moderate proto-nationalism was subject to repressive measures by the French in 1911–12 (Gabriele Montalbano, 2020). Little nationalist activity took place during World War I (1914–18), but the first attempt at mass political organization came during the interwar period, when the Destour (Constitution) Party was created (the party was named for the short-lived Tunisian constitution of 1861). In 1920 the Destour Party presented the bey and the French government with a document that demanded that a constitutional form of government be established in which Tunisians would possess the same rights as Europeans. The immediate result was the arrest of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tha‘ālibī, the Destour leader (Roberts, Stephen 1929).

Two years later the aged bey, Muḥammad al-Nāṣir, requested that the program of the Destour be adopted or he would abdicate. In response, the resident general, Lucien Saint, surrounded the bey's palace with troops, and the demand was withdrawn. Saint thus introduced restrictive measures, together with minor reforms, that pacified Tunisian sentiment and weakened the nationalist movement for several years. In 1934 a young Tunisian lawyer, Habib Bourguiba, and his colleagues broke with the Destour Party to form a new organization, the Neo-Destour, which aimed at spreading propaganda and gaining mass support. Under Bourguiba's vigorous leadership, the new party soon supplanted the existing Destour Party and its leaders. Attempts by the French to suppress the new movement only fueled the fire. The Neo-Destour began to gain more power and influence after the arrival of the Popular Front government in France in 1936. When the Popular Front government collapsed, repression was renewed in Tunisia and was met with civil disobedience. In 1938 serious disturbances led to the

arrest of Bourguiba and other leaders of the party, which was then officially dissolved (Kenneth J. Perkins, 2004).

At the outbreak of war in 1939, Neo-Destour leaders, though still untried, were deported to France. However, they were released by the Nazis in 1942 following the German occupation of Vichy France, and, since Hitler regarded Tunisia as a sphere of Italian influence, he handed them over to the fascist government in Rome. There the leaders were treated with deference, the fascists hoping to gain support for the Axis. Bourguiba steadily refused to cooperate. In March 1943 he made a noncommittal broadcast, and the Neo-Destour leaders were finally allowed to proceed to Tunis, where the reigning bey, Muḥammad al-Munṣif (Moncef), formed a ministry of individuals who were sympathetic to Destour. The assumption of power by the Free French after the Nazi retreat produced complete disillusionment for the Neo-Destour cause. The bey was deposed, while Bourguiba, accused of collaboration with the Nazis, escaped imprisonment by fleeing in disguise to Egypt in 1945 (Kenneth J. Perkins, 2004). Still, a vigorous campaign of propaganda for Tunisian independence continued, and, in view of the emancipation of the eastern Arab states and later of neighbouring Libya, the French felt compelled to make concessions. In 1951 the French permitted a government with nationalist sympathies to

take office—of which the secretary-general of the Neo-Destour, Salah Ben Youssef, became a member—and Bourguiba was allowed to return to Tunisia. When the newly formed government wished to establish a Tunisian parliament, however, further repressions ensued; Bourguiba was exiled, and most of the ministers were put under arrest. This resulted, for the first time, in outbreaks of terrorism. Nationalist guerrillas began to operate in the mountains, virtually paralyzing the country. In July 1954 the French premier, Pierre Mendès-France, promised to grant complete autonomy to Tunisia, subject to a negotiated agreement. Bourguiba returned to Tunisia and was able to supervise the negotiations without directly participating (Aldrich, Robert, 1996).

In June 1955 an agreement was finally signed by the Tunisian delegates—though it imposed strict limits in the fields of foreign policy, education, defense, and finance—and a mainly Neo-Destour ministry was formed. Salah Ben Youssef denounced the document, saying it was too restrictive, and refused to attend a specially summoned congress that unanimously supported Bourguiba. In response, he organized a brief armed resistance in the south that was quickly repressed. Ben Youssef fled the country to escape imprisonment (Nevill Barbour L et Carl Brown Emma Murphy).



Figure 1: Geo-Strategic location of Tunisia

SOURCES: -en.wikipedia.org › wiki › History_of_Tunisia_underHistory of Tunisia under French rule - Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Geography_of_TunisiaGeography of Tunisia - Wikipedia. www.countryreports.org › country › TunisiaTunisia geography, maps, climate, environment and terrain ...

The geo-strategic and geo-political location of Tunisia in North Africa closely to the Mediterranean sea since the pre-colonial era played an important role in the commercial activities operated by the Europeans. This factor among others saw the presence of the Italians, British and the French settlers around the territories and the scramble for who to command the country during the age of imperialism against the Africans. However, the French took advantages of non-

payment of loans contracted by the Bey Government in support of her European Great Powers strongly occupied and colonized Tunisians until 1956 when independence was granted with neo-colonial strings.

Tunisia became a French protectorate when the Treaty of Bardo was concluded on 12 May 1881. This treaty allowed France to control certain geographical areas under the guise of re-establishing order and

protecting the Bey from internal opposition, and also allowed French diplomatic agents to protect Tunisian interests in foreign countries. Then the Convention of Marsa of 8 June 1883 gave France a right to intervene in Tunisia's domestic affairs. Now Tunisia was placed under the control of the French Resident-General (Ryo Ikeda, 2015; online June 2023). French colonists' writings echo Metropolitan France's "colonial fantasies" in Tunisia, particularly, the idea of restoring the Roman legacy. The historical imagery of Rome and Carthage are critical to the French colony's historical narrative, which carefully selects the story to be old in order to legitimize France's agricultural "mission civilisatrice," or "civilizing mission," in Tunisia. In French colonial writings, Roman Tunisia and Carthage are portrayed as a fertile setting where agriculture brought prosperity. Robert Wastelier, Charles Géniaux and many other French colonists offered detailed ecological descriptions of Tunisia, to which they often referred as "the granary of Rome." No doubt, the French colonial narrative places all the blame on Tunisia's "uncivilized Arabs and Berbers" for leaving behind the glory of Carthage and Rome. This narrative depicts the role of the French as a mere restoration mission of a forgotten legacy in Tunisia.

To expand the colonial dynamics in agriculture, French colonists studied Tunisia's ecology of farming and environment and later on institutionalized agricultural colonialism. According to some French colonists, colonialism was a vocation. Among those who held such a view was Charles Géniaux, an author who settled in Tunisia and wrote a 'colonial manual' entitled "Comment on devient Colon." In his pamphlet, published in Paris in 1908, he asserts that colonialism is a "difficult vocation" and that a colonist has to have extensive knowledge of the colony: Along with the theoretical aspects of French agricultural colonialism in Tunisia, there was an institutional aspect at play (Ihsan Mejdi, 10 February 2017). To concretize their ambitions, French colonists established several agricultural schools with the aim of producing well trained French colonists who would later exploit the colony's natural resources. The schools were established in Metropolitan France and its colonies.

In the 12th issue of the periodical "*La Dépêche Coloniale*," published in 1909, we read a lengthy article on the technologies, laboratories, and agricultural techniques used in what the French called the "Jardin colonial," literally the "Colonial Garden." In 1898, the French established L'école coloniale d'agriculture de Tunis among other colonial agricultural institutions and associations. The school opened its doors to French students from Metropolitan France where other colonial institutions, such as *L'école supérieure d'agriculture coloniale*, were established. French students were offered the chance to continue their training in colonial schools outside Metropolitan France where they

received theoretical and practical agricultural education. The aim of this training was to prepare, in Géniaux's words, "des colons agriculteurs," or agricultural colonists: Likewise, reports sent in the 1880's from explorer Henri Duveyrier to Paul Cambon, then Resident-General in Tunisia, portray the country as the best place for colonists to recreate the French habitat. For Duveyrier, the north of Tunisia and its coastal regions are "*better than the southern regions of Europe*." (Ihsan Mejdi, 2017).

With the threat of independence, the French immediately banned Neo Destour and sent Bourguiba to a variety of French prisons in France where he spent the next 20 years of his life. World War II brought about a halt in Tunisia's bid for independence, but helped win Bourguiba a transfer from a French prison to an Axis one in Rome. The Nazis attempted to pressure Bourguiba into helping the Axis powers with his influence over the Tunisian independence fighters in pushing back the Allied invasion of North Africa. He refused – primarily due to his belief that Germany would lose the war and was released from prison in 1943 when the Nazi campaign was finally defeated at El Alamein in Egypt. Upon his return to Tunisia, Bourguiba proposed a concept of gradual independence for Tunisia which was supported by most Tunisians (Kenneth J. Perkins, 2004). As a means of forcing the French to leave, the Neo Destour returned to armed resistance by carrying attacks on colonial facilities spearheaded by militants such as Chedly Kallala. As a result, from 1952 to 1954, Bourguiba was imprisoned for the attacks, further fueling the fire between Tunisian Independence and French Rule. In June 1954, new French Prime Minister Pierre Mendès France came to power and immediately instituted a withdrawal policy from Tunisia to lessen the violent backlashes occurring in the colonies. France still retained control of Tunisia's foreign affairs, and gradually the nations returned to the same arrangement of 1881. By November 1955, France granted Morocco independence, which helped pave the way for Tunisia's independence. March 20, 1956, Tunisia achieved independence from France proposed by Habib Bourguiba (Kenneth J. Perkins, 2004).

In fact, series of assassination and terror took the order of the day in Tunisia commanded by the agents of 3Es. The Resident General persisted in his attempts to pressure the Bey into signing the French reforms. On 30 November he surrounded the palace with troops, on the pretext of protecting the Bey from the large demonstrations expected for the Mawlid festival. With all his nationalist advisers either in prison or in exile, the Bey had no-one to support him apart from Farhat Hached, the trade union leader, who visited him every day, encouraging him to stand firm.^[41] On 5 December 1952, Hached was assassinated by 'La Main Rouge' (The Red Hand), a terrorist unit operated by the French state to eliminate nationalists in North Africa (Lisa Anderson, 1986). Anyone else who might advise

or support the Bey was kept out of the way: Mohamed Salah Mzali was obliged to leave Tunis and remain in Monastir and when he tried to telephone the palace he found that all the lines had been cut. Completely cut off from the outside world, the ailing Bey wrote to the French government once again asking to restart negotiations about internal autonomy. With France's negative response on 20 December, he was able to resist no longer, and signed the decrees formulated months previously in Paris, which allowed for new municipal elections. Bourguiba, in exile on the Galite Islands, understood all too well the extreme pressure which the Bey had withstood for so long.

When he learned that he had finally given way and authorised the French proposals, he remarked 'I don't think we need to throw stones at this venerable old man who struggles alone in almost desperate conditions against an enemy who has no conscience and can exert such pressure. He may have thought... that it was better to bend once again than to be broken.' In any case, the reforms imposed by the French, on which they set such great store, remained a dead letter – the nationalists launched a campaign of terror against both candidates and voters (Lisa Anderson, 1986). This extended as far as the ruling family itself – on 1 July 1953 the Bey al-Mahalla Azzedine Bey was assassinated inside his own palace, accused of weakening the position of the Bey by conducting discussions of his own with the Resident General. Arrested on the spot, the assassin was tried before a military tribunal, condemned to death on 28 September 1953 and shot on 14 April 1954. Essadok Bey, son of Mustapha Bey, became the new Bey al-Mahalla. He was not regarded sympathetic to the Neo Destour. On 2 September 1953, Jean de Hauteclocque was finally recalled to Paris (Dwight L. Ling, 1966).

On 20 March 1956 the Franco-Tunisian protocol was signed by the Grand Vizier Tahar Ben Ammar and the French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau. The new Tunisian government, led by Bourguiba, deemed the country to be independent by virtue of this protocol, and therefore refused to enter into the subsequent bilateral negotiations it provided for. Independence was regarded as a *fait accompli*, and for this reason the independence protocol was never ratified either by the Bey, or indeed by France, although this is what the protocol on internal autonomy required (Dwight L. Ling, 1966).

The Course of International Debts and Its Aftermath to the Confiscation of Tunisian Territory to the French Colonial Ampit

Contracting the First and Second Loans with the Characteristics of Mismanagements

Tunisia's first overseas loan was recorded in 1863 which facilitated the French conquest of Tunisia after 18 years of none payment of the debts. At that time, the financial centres of Paris and London were in active competition, the latter being the global

forerunner. The Parisian bankers like their counterparts in London, boasted of ample liquidity and sought for investment opportunities abroad with Loans granted to Latin America, Asia, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Russia and North America were aplenty. The funds were mainly disbursed for the construction of railways with a speculative bubble taking shape in that sector, the refinancing of outstanding debts in the case of Latin America and arms purchases (Marx Karl, 1867). Yields on the Paris local market were approximately 4-6 percent while yields on overseas loans were much higher between 10-11 percent real yields (Eric Toussaint, 2016).

In early 1863, when the Bey announced that he wanted to borrow 25 million francs from abroad, many bankers and brokers in London (including Baron James de Rothschild and various London firms) and Paris (the *Crédit mobilier* and Emile Erlanger, a banker from Frankfurt based in the French capital) offered their services. (Corm Georges. 1982). This external borrowing was meant to restructure the domestic debt; equivalent to 30 million French Francs (remember that it rose by 60 percent between 1859 and 1862 because of the expenditures of Bey Muhammad as-Sadiq who had been increasingly purchasing foreign goods. The outstanding debt was supposed to be liquidated with money borrowed from abroad. In reality, while the old debt was repaid, the authorities issued new *teskérés* (or treasury bonds) for an equivalent amount. This is what Victor Villet, the French Treasury Inspector, had to say: "While old securities were reimbursed simultaneously in the stock exchange and by the representatives of the Erlanger household in Tunis... a local government broker (Mr. Guttierrez) resumed accepting public money, in exchange for new *teskérés* issued a 91percent. By dint of this farcical repayment, the debt simply ... increased by approximately 15 million". (Trans: CADTM) The revenue from the sale of the new *teskérés* was largely diverted to the pockets of the Prime Minister, other dignitaries and wealthy European residents (Ganiage, Jean 1959). The same Treasury Inspector also wrote: "The funds from the 1863 loan [which] were paid in cash in Bardo (seat of the Bey and the Prime Minister) ... were deposited in a special account, but were not entered in the official government books; the state funds did not have any record of them and there is nothing to prove that they were used for public expenditure." (Trans: CADTM) (Ganiage Jean 1959).

The sum borrowed in 1863 was squandered in less than a year. At the same time, for the first time in Tunisian history the state was indebted to overseas agencies and that too by an immense sum. Annual repayments to foreign countries were unsustainable. The internal debt, which should have been repaid by external borrowing, increased twofold. Hounded by the creditors, the Beylik decided to pass the burden to the people by increasing the *mejba* (tax per capita) by

100%. The revolt of 1864: outcome of the decision to increase a given tax by 100% in order to repay the 1863 debt. The tax increase in 1864 caused a general rebellion in the country (Dwight L. Ling, 1966). The protesters mainly demanded the discontinuation of the increase in the mejba or par capita tax. As soon as the Bey's officials started visiting the different corners of the country to collect the mejba, now increased to 72 piastres, the revolt broke out. On March 10, 1864 the French vice-consul Jean-Henri Mattei telegraphed from Sfax: "All the tribes have agreed that they will not pay the new tax of 72 piastres. (...) A network of all the tribes will be the first signal that it's time for the advocates of this tax to leave Tunis." (Trans: CADTM) A few weeks later, another consular dispatch read: "The insurrection is widespread and is within an hour from Tunis." (Trans: CADTM)

According to various witnesses, the insurgents accused the government, mostly the Prime Minister Mustapha Khaznadar, of selling the country to the French. They cited the 1863 loan granted by Erlanger, the banker from Paris, as proof (uca.edu › french-tunisia-1881-195613. French Tunisia (1881-1956) - University of Central Arkansas). France, Britain, Italy and the Ottoman Empire sent warships to the Tunisian territorial waters to threaten the people and to supply necessary aid to the authorities in case the situation went out of hands. The Bey stepped back amidst protests and announced on April 21, 1864 that the mejba will no longer be twofold. In July 1864, he reprised the concessions to clinch a deal with Ali Ben Ghedhahem, the main rebel leader. Then, with the support of foreign powers, he unleashed repression. The Sultan, monarch of the Ottoman Empire, gave financial support to the Bey so that he could form new troops and take recourse to repression. The Sultan took this initiative to prevent France, Britain and Italy from outflanking him (Dwight L. Ling, 1966).

Still facing challenges from the first loan, the second external borrowing was worked out in Paris in 1865 because the 1863 loan had failed to improve the country's economic condition, the Bey and his Prime Minister took a headlong rush into a deal with Erlanger for a new loan in March 1865. Tunisia took on a further 36.78 million francs of debt. The conditions he imposed were even worse and more outrageous than in 1863. In fact, while securities worth 500 francs were sold for 480 francs in 1863, (uca.edu › french-tunisia-1881-195613. French Tunisia (1881-1956) - University of Central Arkansas). The new securities were now sold for 380 francs, i.e. at 76% of their face value. A buyer of a security worth 500 francs paid the discounted price of 380 francs, expecting to earn an annual interest of 35 francs for 15 years (525 francs). On its maturity in 1880, 500 francs were added to the security. An investment of 380 francs fetching 1025 francs, i.e. a profit of 645 francs, was extremely alluring. The notional interest rate was 7% but as the annual interest

amounted to 35 francs the actual yield was 9.21% (= 35/380). The Tunisian State took on a new debt of 36.78 million francs, however, the country received a little less than 20 million francs, since brokerage fees and commissions charged by Erlanger and Morpurgo-Oppenheim, his associates, amounted to 18 percent (Paul Henri d'Estournelles de Constant, 2002).

What is more, almost 3 million was diverted directly, half for the bankers, half for the Prime Minister and his associates. The result was threefold: The new debt contracted in 1865 amounted to 36.78 million francs; the actual amount received was less than 20 million. And the amount to be repaid over 15 years was 75.4 million. The bankers had struck gold: without investing anything, they earned approximately 6.5 million francs in the form of commissions, brokerage and outright theft at the time of issuance. All the securities were sold in a matter of days. Paris went euphoric over these securities from Muslim countries (Tunisia, Ottoman Empire, Egypt) and these were termed "turban securities." The bankers paid newspaper editors to publish cheerful reports. As the Tunisian economy slumped, *Semaine financière*, a weekly Parisian journal wrote the following about the 1865 loan: "Today, the Bey of Tunis is under the moral protection of France, which takes interest in the Tunisian people's prosperity, since this prosperity also implies Algeria's safety". (Trans: CADTM) The swindles of bankers such as Erlanger and Morpurgo-Oppenheim did not end there. Not content with embroiling Tunisia in an unfair debt they actively intervened, so that the loan would be used to finance their personal profit. Two examples: they convinced the Bey to buy two useless ships from a certain Audibert, a Marseilles merchant, for the price of new ships (250,000 francs).

According to Victor Villet, the French Treasury Inspector, E. Erlanger, who had undertaken to supply 100 rifled barrels of the latest model for 1 million francs, did in fact deliver "ancient guns with their breeches knotted in a kind of sleeve (Marx Karl, 1867). The con was too crude; in seconds we realised that those guns could not have cost the supplier more than 200,000 francs." (Trans: CADTM) The list of commercial supplies, reeking of obvious fraud, is long. Moreover, Erlanger persuaded the Bey to grant him a concession for manufacturing Tebourba linen, as security for the loan. However, the debts accumulated during the period 1863-1865 led to Tunisia's transformation into a Protectorate. The new debts accumulated during 1863 – 1865 left Tunisia at the mercy of its external creditors and France. It was simply impossible for Tunisia to successfully repay the due amount. The public treasury received a significant amount (30 million piastres, a sum much higher than an ordinary year's revenues) in terms of the colossal revenues from tax following the repression of late 1864-early 1865. However, debt payment and extravagant

spending against public interest depleted it quickly. The year 1867 fared dismally in terms of agricultural production. In addition, the Bey exported agricultural goods to generate income. This resulted in a famine in many parts of the country and also a cholera epidemic since the state's policies fostered a sickly population (devastated by taxes and affected by the rising price of basic food) and public expenditure in health was scanty. We're speaking of 5,000 deaths in the capital, mainly due to famine, and 20,000 throughout Tunisia (Marx Karl. 1867).

The Shortsightedness of Beylical Government and International Imperialist Commitment Outlining Protocol of Colonisation Attempts

In January 1868, Marquis de Moustier, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, broadly outlined the proposal to establish an International Commission for taking control of Tunisia's finances: "I think that our efforts should primarily focus on ensuring a proper management of the revenues pledged by the beylical Government. If we manage to exert a genuine control over the fiscal products – left in the hands of incapable hands or infidels today – we could take a giant leap towards our desired target. If there is an agreement for applying this principle we could entrust the work to a Commission with its headquarters in Tunis." (Trans: CADTM). To that, there was the formation of an International Financa Commission in 1869 (Eric Toussaint, 2016). In April, 1868, the Bey planned to issue a decree establishing the International Finance Commission as instructed by the French representatives. 15 months later, when France had received the green signal from Britain and Italy, the Bey issued the decree. The text of the Decree dated July 5, 1869 demonstrated Tunisia's outright capitulation to its creditors.

Article 9 was particularly important because it stipulated very clearly that the Commission would lay claim to all state revenues without exception. It additionally stated that no loan would be granted without its permission. Article 3 specified, even though diplomatically, that the most important figure in this Commission was the representative of France who would be appointed by the French Emperor. In fact, the Bey ratified that (Eric Toussaint, 2016). The Commission was the one to ascertain the exact amount of the debt (Art. 5). That the Commission would restructure Tunisia's debt and decide whether or not to reduce it, was a fundamental issue for the creditor banks. Article 10 was also of paramount importance for the French bankers because it stipulated that two direct representatives would be chosen from them and included in the Commission. Consequently, when the Commission was set up in November 1869, the union of the bondholders led by the Parisian banker Alphonse Pinard had got Erlanger as their representative. British and Italian creditors holding domestic debt securities were also represented ([en.wikipedia.org > wiki >](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Finance_Commission)

[French_conquest_of_Tunisia](#) French conquest of Tunisia - Wikipedi).

Extracts from the Decree of the Bey of Tunisia Establishing the International Finance Commission

According to the Bey Government, in view of the well-being of our kingdom, our subjects and our trade, we see the need to establish a finance commission in compliance with the decree issued on April 4 last year, later ratified by our decree of May 29, the content of which is as follows:

Art. 1. The Commission, with regard to which our decree of 4 April 1868 was issued, will be constituted in our capital within one month.

Art. 2. This Commission will be divided into two separate committees; an Executive Committee and a Control Committee.

Art. 3. The Executive Committee will be formed in the following manner: two officials from our own government appointed by us, and a French Treasury inspector also appointed by us and primarily chosen by the emperor's government.

Art. 4. The Executive Committee will have the responsibility to oversee the current state of various claims constituting the kingdom's debt, and the resources available to the government for meeting them.

Art. 5. The Executive Committee will open a register in which all debts, both external and within the kingdom, comprising *teskérés* or treasury bonds, as well as the securities for the loans of 1863 and 1865, will be recorded. As for the debts that are not controlled by government contracts, the bondholders must report within two months. For that purpose, the executive committee will ensure the publication of a notice in the newspapers of Tunis and abroad.

Art. 6. The Executive Committee will demonstrate its willingness to familiarize itself with all authentic documents of income and expenditure. The Ministry of Finance will provide necessary resources to this effect.(...)

Art. 8. The Executive Committee will make all arrangements concerning the general debt and we will extend all the necessary support to ensure that the relevant measures are implemented.

Art. 9. The Executive Committee will receive all state revenues without exception; treasury bills or other securities will not be issued without the consent of the said committee further authorized by the control committee; and if the government is obliged, God forbid, to borrow, it can do so only with the prior approval of both committees.

All *teskérés* that would be issued for the Commission-apportioned amount for government expenditure will be issued on behalf of the Commission and bear the Executive Committee's stamp. These *teskérés* will not exceed the figure stipulated in the expense budget.

Art. 10. The Control Committee will be formed in the following manner: two French members for the debts of 1863 and 1865; two English members and two Italians members representing the bondholders for the domestic debt.

The articles above were written at the *Palace of La Goulette* on the 26 of Rabi' al-awwal, 1286 (July 5, 1869).

Sources: Andrew Christopher *et al.*, 1971; Eric Toussaint, 2016; Gabriele Montalbano, May 2020, online, June 2, 2023).

The Restructuring of Tunisian debts and Great Powers Support of France Occupation of Tunisia 1870

One of the principal tasks of the Commission, in fact the most urgent, was to restructure the debt. Victor Villet, the inspector of finances designated by France and, as we have seen, the principal person of the Commission, proposed in December 1869 that the sum of Tunisian debt, evaluated at 121 million francs be reduced to less than 56 million francs and rescheduled. The bankers' representatives rejected the proposition and gained the support of their respective governments, particularly the government of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte who was very close to the French high finance sector (Dwight L. Ling, 1966). Not only was there no reduction of Tunisian debt, the bankers managed to have it increased to 125 million francs. This was a complete victory for the bankers' representatives nominated to defend the interests of Alphonse Pinard and Emile Erlanger. These bankers held the 1863 and 1863 Tunisian bonds purchased on the open market (bonds they had themselves emitted for the Tunisian treasury) for 135 or 150 francs, speculating that they would lose value. Thanks to the restructuring of 1870 they gained replacement bonds at a value of almost 500 francs. So, the bonds with a face value of 500 francs that they had previously purchased for 150 francs were now exchanged for new bonds at 500 francs. A windfall that produced a new odious debt, as the historian Nicolas Stockpot wrote, the idea was to tighten some more the rope that the Bey had put around his own neck. N. Stockpot wrote the following in his analysis of the enterprises of A. Pinard, director of the bondholders' union "After 1867, the Tunisian state of bankruptcy allowed the engagement of the next phase (Eric Toussaint, 2016).

In the difficult negotiations and sly manoeuvring that followed, Pinard cynically continued to make windfall profits despising French savers as much as the condition of the Tunisians, but with the

striking efficiency of an unequalled financier, as a result of the Tunisian debt unification of 1870 the five million francs held by the bondholders' union increased in value to thirteen million francs." (Trans: CADTM) (en.wikipedia.org › wiki › French_protectorate_of_Tunisia French protectorate of Tunisia - Wikipedia). The Tunisian authorities acted in complete complicity with this plundering of public resources. The Prime Minister Mustapha Khaznadar, other dignitaries of the regime and not forgetting the class of wealthy Tunisians who also held a very large quantity of Tunisian internal bonds realised enormous profits from this restructuring. As in most other countries, the local dominant classes are in total cahoots with the international creditors because they draw a large part of their own revenues from debt repayments (en.wikipedia.org › wiki › French_conquest_of_Tunisia French conquest of Tunisia - Wikipedi).

At the Berlin Congress in June 1878 both Germany and England advised France that she had a free field to do with Tunisia as she wanted. Otto von Bismarck's Germany, that inflicted a stinging defeat on France in the 1870-71 confrontation (Louis Napoléon Bonaparte was taken captive at Sedan, Alsace-Lorraine was annexed and damages obtained), considered that the new French rulers should be awarded some form of consolation (the Second Empire was replaced by the Third Republic in 1870. Germany had no interest in Tunisia and Otto Von Bismarck, then German Chancellor felt that France would be less concerned with regaining Alsace Lorraine if it focused on conquering Tunisia. (en.wikipedia.org › wiki › French_protectorate_of_Tunisia French protectorate of Tunisia - Wikipedia). England, that prioritised its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean (Cyprus; Egypt, Syria...) also approved of giving France something to do by grabbing Tunisia. Lord Salisbury, the British representative said to his French counterpart: "Take Tunis if you want, England will not object and will respect your decision. What's more, you can't leave Carthage in the hands of barbarians (Trans: CADTM)." The French Minister of the Interior said "Mr. von Bismarck leads us to understand that he will not object if we take Tunisia (Trans: CADTM)."

The French government took its time to consider this position but did not take action because of other priorities. Meanwhile, the French consul in Tunis was on the lookout for a slip from the Bey that would justify a French military intervention (en.wikipedia.org › wiki › French_conquest_of_Tunisia French conquest of Tunisia - Wikipedi). Finally, the action took place in 1881 when a majority favourable to conquest formed in the French government: the pretext being the 'exactions' by the Kroumir tribe. The bankers were informed of the French government's intentions and purchased massive quantities of Tunisian bonds, priced at 330 francs, on the Parisian market in January 1881. On the eve of the military intervention their price had

increased to 487 francs (for a nominal value of 500 francs), a price hitherto not attained. The idea was simple: once France had control of Tunisia the debt would be restructured again and all the creditors would be paid. They made no mistake; the debt was restructured in 1884, during the second term of President of the council, Jules Ferry. Public finances were also made to contribute to the satisfaction of the bankers. The Havas agency, owned by Erlanger since 1879, took part in the public opinion campaign favourable to military intervention (Ahmed Ounaise, 2010).

However, France was ready to jump, on the first opportunity, to use the agreements made at the Berlin Congress. The difficulty for Jules Ferry was that a military intervention needed the agreement of the Chamber of Deputies (Roberts, Stephen A. 1929). As already said, the French diplomats sought all the possible means to provoke an incident that would justify a French military intervention. Theodore Roustan, the French Consul was ready to pounce. In May 1880 he wrote to Baron de Courcel, a very influential French diplomat (who would become the French Ambassador to Berlin in 1885 and take part in the 1884-85 conference which 'regulated' the European colonial takeover of Africa): "We should wait and prepare our motifs to act before preparing the means. The foolishness of the Tunisian administration will help." The conflict between the Algerian Ouled Nahd tribe and the Tunisian Kroumir tribe provided the opportunity to launch a large scale operation. At the end of February 1881 a difference between the two tribes provoked an attack by the Ouled Nahd on the Kroumirs with fatal casualties on both sides (Roberts, Stephen, 1929).

The French Consul was exalted. "We could not hope for a better occasion to act, and to act alone because the other powers are not concerned." To avenge their dead, 400-500 Kroumir tribesmen attacked the Ouled Nahd twice on March 30-31 in Algerian territory but were repulsed by French troops; six French soldiers died in the fighting. Jules Ferry obtained funds from parliament to "re-establish order". The way he requested the funds on April 11, 1881 was absolutely deceitful and hypocritical: "We are going to Tunisia to punish these crimes. At the same time we shall take all the measures necessary to make sure this kind of event does not happen again. The Government of the Republic does not seek conquests; it does not need them (loud applause from the left and the centre); but it has received in heritage, from previous Governments a magnificent Algerian possession that has been glorified by French blood and made fertile by France's treasures (Ahmed Ounaise, 2010).

It will go so far, in the military repression underway, as is necessary to safeguard, in a permanent and serious manner, the security and future of France's

Africa (Trans: CADTM)." The Bardo treaty, creating a French protectorate, was signed on May 12, 1881 then validated at the Chamber of Deputies by an overwhelming majority. Only one member voted against it, the courageous socialist Alfred Talandier. The Bey of Tunis was coerced into accepting for fear of losing his position, knowing that his brother would willingly take over with the help of the French. He ceded to the French Resident-General all his powers in foreign affairs, territorial defence and administrative reform faced with the people's resistance, particularly the rebellion of the Tunisian tribes, the French military action reinforced and the expeditionary corps was increased to 50,000. Through the La Marsa convention of 1883 the Bey was shed of his remaining authority and Tunisia came under direct French administration (Eric Toussaint, 2016).

Consider Italian nation-building in the French protectorate of Tunisia not as a given but as a social and cultural project within Italian-speaking collectivities. This analysis will focus on the Tunisian chapter of the Dante Alighieri Society. The primary purpose of this society was to educate and spread patriotic values among Italian migrants (Gabriele Montalbano, January 2022). Though Tunisia went bankrupt in 1869 and an international financial commission—with British, French, and Italian representatives—was imposed on the country, there was one last attempt to reform Tunisia from within and thus avoid complete European domination. It was made during the reformist ministry of Khayr al-Dīn (1873–77), one of the most effective statesmen of the 19th-century Muslim world. However, enemies from within and European intrigues from without conspired to force him from office. The final blow to Tunisia's sovereignty came at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, when Britain acquiesced to France's control of Tunisia (Gabriele Montalbano, 2020).

On the pretext that Tunisians had encroached on Algerian territory, France invaded Tunisia in 1881 and imposed the Treaty of Bardo, which sanctioned French military occupation of Tunisia, transferred to France the bey's authority over finance and foreign relations, and provided for the appointment of a French resident minister as intermediary in all matters of common interest. This provoked an uprising in southern Tunisia during which France attacked and captured Sousse in July 1881, took Kairouan in October, and seized Gafsa and Gabès in November. After the death of Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, his successor, 'Alī, was forced to introduce administrative, judicial, and financial reforms that the French government considered useful ([en.wikipedia.org > wiki > History_of_Tunisia_under_French_rule](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Tunisia_under_French_rule) - Wikipedia). This agreement, known as the Convention of Al-Marsa, was signed in 1883 and solidified French control over Tunisia. Tunisia was called Ifrīqiyyah in the early centuries of the Islamic period. That name, in turn, comes from the Roman word for Africa and the name

also given by the Romans to their first African colony following the Punic Wars against the Carthaginians in 264–146 bce.

Following the decline of Rome, the region was ruled briefly by the Vandals and then the Byzantine Empire before being conquered by the Arabs in 647 ce. Although the Arabs initially unified North Africa, by 1230 a separate Tunisian dynasty had been established by the Hafṣids. Muslim Andalusians migrated to the area after having been forced out of Spain during the Reconquista, particularly following the defeat of the Muslim kingdom of Granada in 1492. By 1574, Tunisia was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, whose control of the region, always tenuous, had all but dissolved by the 19th century ([en.wikipedia.org > wiki >](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/)

[French_protectorate_of_Tunisia](#) French protectorate of Tunisia - Wikipedia). From the above literature of French occupation of Tunisia as a colony supported by the then European Great Powers, it called our attention to strictly identify those French agents of 3 Es who moderated their possession to independence in 1956. There were 23 agents in general as indicated on table No. 1 below.

Lists of abbreviations used on tables

RM: Resident Minister

RG: Resident-General

HC: High Commissioner

Identification of the Diplomatic Agents of 3Es in the Management of Tunisian Resources

Table 1: The 23 French Principal Diplomatic Agents (FPDA) of the 3Es 1881-1956

No	Names	Period	Portfolio
1	Théodore Roustan	13/05/ 1881 – 28/02/ 1882	RM
2	Paul Cambon	28/02/ 1882 – 23/06 1885	RM
3	Paul Cambon	23/06 1885 – 28/10/ 1886	RG
4	Justin Massicault	23/11/ 1886 – 05/11/ 1892	RG
5	Charles Rouvier	11/1892 – 14/11 1894	RG
6	René Millet	14/11/ 1894 -11/ 1900	RG
7	Benoît de Merkel	11/1900 – 27/12/ 1901	RG
8	Stephen Pichon	27/12/ 1901 -07/02/ 1907	RG
9	Gabriel Alapetite	02/1907 – 26/10/ 1918	RG
10	Étienne Flandin	26/10/ 1918 – 01/01/ 1921	RG
11	Lucien Saint	01/ 01/ 1921- 02/01/ 1929	RG
12	François Manceron	18/02/ 1929 – 29/07/ 1933	RG
13	Marcel Peyrouton	29/07/ 1933 – 21/03 1936	RG
14	Armand Guillon	17/04/ 1936 - 18 /10/ 1938	RG
15	Eirik Labonne	22/11/ 1938 -03/06/ 1940	RG
16	Marcel Peyrouton	03/ 06/ 1940 – 22/07/ 1940	RG
17	Jean-Pierre Esteva	26/07/ 1940 – 10/05 1943	RG
18	Charles Mast	10/05/ 1943 – 22/02/1947	RG
19	Jean Mons	22/02/ 1947 - 13 /06/ 1950	RG
20	Jean de Hauteclouque	13/01/ 1952 -0 2/09/ 1953	RG
21	Pierre Voizard	09/ 1953 -05/11/ 1954	RG
22	Pierre Boyer de Latour du Moulin	05/11/ 1954 – 31/08/ 1955	RG
23	Roger Seydoux	13/09/ 1955 – 20/03/ 1956 End of colonialism and independence of Tunisia marking the beginning of State to State Bilateral Relations	HC

Sources. <http://www.rulers.org/rult.html#tunisia>, John Stewart, McFarlan, *African States and Rulers*; John V da Graca, *Heads of State and Government, 2nd Edition*, MacMillan Press (2000). Categories: [en.wikipedia.org > wiki >](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/)

[List_of_French_residents](#) List of French residents-general in Tunisia - Wikipedia. Categories: [en.wikipedia.org > wiki >](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/)

[List_of_French_residents](#) List of French residents-general in Tunisia - Wikipedia, [en.wikipedia.org > wiki >](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/)

[Governorates_of_Tunisia](#) Governorates of Tunisia - Wikipedia.

The type of natural resources which facilitated 3Es of the French colonialism interest

Tunisia's key natural resources include phosphates, petroleum, zinc, lead and iron ore. In 2010, the country was globally recognized as a significant producer of phosphate-based fertilizers and phosphate rock. In the same year, the country's phosphate rock contribution to the world market was 4.3%. (www.azomining.com > [ArticleTunisia: Mining](#),

[Minerals and Fuel Resources - AZoMining.com](#)). In 1885, four years after the occupation of Tunisia, the French geologist Philip Thomas discovered the presence of significant amounts of phosphate in the Metlaoui area in the southwest Governorate of Gafsa. It was not long before the colonial authorities began to plunder this resource. In 1897, they granted a license to a French company to explore and exploit phosphates on a precondition that it pays for laying a railway between

the mines and the seaport of Sfax, in the center of Eastern Tunisia. The Phosphate Company and the Gafsa railways started by digging tunnels for underground mines in the Metlaoui area in 1899, the Redeyef area in 1903, the Om El Araies area in 1904, and the Mdhila area in 1920, creating the Gafsa Mining Basin.

Phosphate is the most important natural and mining resource in Tunisia in terms of financial returns and the volume of reserves available (Mohamed Rami Abdelmoula, 2022). It has a special place in the country's modern history, as its story began with the French occupation of Tunisia and continues to this day. Phosphate mines contributed to building the Tunisian trade union movement and in assisting the national movement and the armed resistance to colonialism. This natural resource later played a leading role in providing the financial resources to build a post-independence Tunisia. Phosphate mines contributed to building the Tunisian trade union movement and assisting the national movement and the armed resistance to colonialism. They played a leading role in providing the financial resources to build a post-independence Tunisia. In the recent past, about 30,000 people work, directly and indirectly, in the various stages of phosphate exploitation, which means that this industry is the breadwinner for hundreds of thousands of Tunisians. It also brings large funds to the state treasury. However, this does not conceal the health, environmental, and social tolls of phosphate exploitation, which are terrifyingly high. In addition to extracting crude phosphate in Gafsa and sending it abroad, chemical processing industries have emerged that produce agricultural fertilizers and phosphoric acid in Sfax. At the beginning of the 1960s - after the independence of Tunisia and the company's nationalization - production progressed significantly, reaching 3 million tons annually (Mohamed Rami Abdelmoula, 2022).

In addition, the arrival of French colonial farmers changed the nature of agricultural production in Tunisia. For example, viticulture gained momentum beginning in 1886 and according to some sources, reached, 2000 hectares that same year. By 1956, 25,000 hectares of Tunisian fertile lands were devoted to viticulture. Viticulture boosted France's wine production and was accompanied by the deterioration of living standards of Tunisian farmers. The "*khammes*" who were working for the French, were exhausted by their masters' taxes and the new agricultural policies. They lived in *gourbis* (stick shacks) and received "some seeds and capital." This, however, was not enough to modernize or improve Tunisian farmers' agricultural techniques and equipment. Thus, small farmers did not in fact have access to genuine agricultural credits as pointed out by Lisa Anderson (Ihsan mejdi, 2017). Likewise, reports sent in the 1880's from explorer Henri Duveyrier to Paul Cambon, then Resident-

General in Tunisia, portray the country as the best place for colonists to recreate the French habitat.

For Duveyrier, the north of Tunisia and its coastal regions are "*better than the southern regions of Europe.*" Wastelier reminds French agricultural colonists of the natural resources that will be at their disposal once they arrive in "the granary of Rome": *Les ressources de la Tunisie pour la culture sont variées...Le sol...se prête à toutes les productions: Les céréales, la vigne...l'olivier, l'oranger...* (Ihsan mejdi, 2017). Along with the theoretical aspects of French agricultural colonialism in Tunisia, there was an institutional aspect at play. To concretize their ambitions, French colonists established several agricultural schools with the aim of producing well trained French colonists who would later exploit the colony's natural resources. The schools were established in Metropolitan France and its colonies. In the 12th issue of the periodical "*La Dépêche Coloniale*," published in 1909, we read a lengthy article on the technologies, laboratories, and agricultural techniques used in what the French called the "*Jardin colonial*," literally the "*Colonial Garden*." In 1898, the French established L'école coloniale d'agriculture de Tunis among other colonial agricultural institutions and associations (Charles Géniaux and Robert Wastelier, 2023).

The school opened its doors to French students from Metropolitan France where other colonial institutions, such as *L'école supérieure d'agriculture coloniale*, were established. French students were offered the chance to continue their training in colonial schools outside Metropolitan France where they received theoretical and practical agricultural education. The aim of this training was to prepare, in Géniaux's words, "*des colons agriculteurs*," or agricultural colonists: *Il faut donc que les élèves de Nantes passent la mer dès la seconde année et viennent demander à l'Ecole Coloniale de Tunis l'enseignement complet et véritable qui fera d'eux des agriculteurs...L'Ecole de Tunis...s'adresse aux jeunes gens qui désirent s'établir comme colons agriculteurs.* Charles Géniaux After Tunisia's independence, L'école coloniale d'agriculture de Tunis became L'école supérieure d'agriculture de Tunis (ESAT). It is currently called L'institut national agronomique de Tunisie (INAT) (Charles Géniaux and Robert Wastelier, 2023). It is true that the French did their best to develop the territory but it does not at the same time cancel the fact colonization of Africans was more of European evils than any good attempt to survive Africans spanning from the commercialization of human beings from slavery to slave trade then crowning with radical imperialists ambitions at the age of Industrial Revolution in Europe.

Nevertheless, Africans needs compensations from their European former colonial Masters irrespective of what they say in the recent accusations

and guiltiness. Their consciousness will never be clear until specific developmental projects are executed without any further conditionalities for the benefits of Africans. But there is one thing Africans have to understand concerning the case of Tunisia on how debts burden pushed the country to the colonial yoke of the French and recent governments have to sit up when contracting heavy loans which are often not directed to the targeted developmental projects for the benefit of the communities.

CONCLUSION

Generally, Italy had a strong interest in Tunisia since the early 19th Century and had briefly entertained the idea of invading the country during the 1860s. Taking into consideration that Italians had long lived in Tunisian territories for centuries, including slaves and their descendants, merchants and members of the Bey's court the Italian language became the lingua franca of Tunisian diplomacy well into the 19th Century and of the various expatriate communities in Tunis that did not speak Arabic language made them more popular but failed in their colonization agenda to the profit of the French. As the 19th Century commenced, the Husaynid dynasty Bey remained the hereditary ruler of the country. Since the early 18th Century Tunisia had been effectively autonomous, although still 'officially' an Ottoman province. Commerce and trade with Europe increased dramatically following the Napoleonic wars. Western merchants especially Italians arrived to establish businesses in the major cities. Italian farmers, tradesmen, and laborers also immigrated to Tunisia. With the rapid surge in contacts with Europe, foreign influence grew. During the rule of Ahmad Bey (r.1837-1855) extensive modern reforms were initiated (Robert Aldrich, 1996). Later, in 1861 Tunisia promulgated the first constitution in the Arab world. Yet the Tunisian drive toward modernizing the state and the economy met resistance. Reformers became frustrated by comfort-seeking insiders, political disorganization, regional discontent, and rural poverty. Earlier in 1861, Prime Minister Mustapha Khaznadar made an effort to modernise administration and increase revenues by doubling taxes. The primary effect, only fully felt by 1864, was widespread rural insurrection, coupled with great hardship for the general population. The government had to negotiate a new loan from foreign bankers. An 1864 revolt in the *Sahil* region was brutally put down.

Later, after ineffective measures had failed, the leading reformer Khair al-Din (Khaireddine) became chief minister 1873–1877, but he too eventually met defeat by wily conservative politicians (Encyclopedia, French protectorate of Tunisia 1881-1956, 2023). European banks advanced funds to the Beylical government for modernizing projects, such as civil improvements, the military, public works, and development projects, but also they included money for the personal use of the Bey. The loans were frequently

negotiated at unfavorable rates and terms. Repayment of this foreign debt eventually grew increasingly difficult to manage (Encyclopedia, French protectorate of Tunisia 1881-1956, 2023). In 1867, an attempt to secure money failed; government revenues were insufficient to meet annual interest payments on the national debt. Tunisia plunged towards bankruptcy. Two years later France, Italy and Britain set up an international finance commission to sort out Tunisia's economic problems and safeguard Western interests. Their actions enjoyed only partial success, largely because of opposition from foreign traders to increases in customs levies. In 1873, Khaznadar again undertook reforms and attacked the widespread financial abuses within the bureaucracy. The results were initially promising, but bad harvests and palace intrigue led to his downfall. In 1869, Tunisia declared itself bankrupt (Nicola A. Ziadeh, 1962).

A *Commission Financière Internationale* (International Financial Commission) was thereafter formed, whose representatives were led by France, and included Italy and Britain. This commission then took control over the Tunisian economy. In 1881, the conquest of Tunisia was initiated by the French Third Republic. The invasion began on 28 April 1881, and lasted until 28 October 1881. Meanwhile, the Treaty of Bardo was signed on 12 May 1881. According to the treaty, the Beylik of Tunis would become a French protectorate from 1881 to 1956, when Tunisia regained its independence as the Kingdom of Tunisia. First holder. Paul Cambon. Final holder. Roger Seydoux. Abolished. 20 March 1956. French Tunisia (dark blue) within other French possessions in Africa (light blue), 1913. In 1881, the conquest of Tunisia was initiated by the French Third Republic. The invasion began on 28 April 1881, and lasted until 28 October 1881. (en.wikipedia.org › wiki › List_of_French_residents List of French residents-general in Tunisia - Wikipedia).

The Ali Bey of Tunis was the traditional, authoritarian ruler who reigned from 1882 to 1902 thereby plundering the country to become a heavy debtor with unpaid international loans.. Under the Protectorate the Bey's rule continued *de jure*, yet *de facto* control of the country passed to the French *Resident General* and his ministers, appointed in Paris. The Bey continued in his lesser role as a figurehead monarch. Yet his position had been tarnished by the court's "prodigality and corruption" and the cynical aristocracy (Guellouz *et al.*, 2010). The harsh put down of the 1864 revolt in the *Sahil* was still remembered a century later. During the first decade, notables and conservative Tunisians had appealed to Ali Bey to effectively mediate with the French. His ability to maneuver was closely confined. "In Tunisia, obedience to the Bey meant submission to the French." Yet the Bey stirred some Tunisian culture into the foreign recipe. Indeed, many Tunisians at first welcomed the progressive changes brought about by the French, but

the general consensus that evolved was that Tunisians preferred to manage their own affairs. Before the French conquest, during the 1860s and 1870s Khair al-Din had introduced modernizing reforms in Tunisia. His innovative ideas, although acknowledging the ascendancy of Europe, remained conversant with Islamic tradition and favored reform on Islamic terms.

He wrote an influential book. (Richard M. Brace, 1964). According to professor Nicola Ziadeh, "the period between 1906 and 1910 saw a definite crystallization of the national movement in Tunisia. This crystallization centered around Islam." By the eve of the First World War (1914–1918), Tunisian 'nationalists' had developed and its adherents encountered an opportunity to publicly define themselves, in terms not only domestic but in light of widespread trends and foreign events. Pan-Islam had been promoted by the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid, and such ideas also developed in Egypt and in India, and touched Tunisia. The more conservative opponents of the Protectorate felt its influence more strongly. Then in 1909 this sultan was deposed. In 1924 the Caliphate in Turkey was terminated by Mustafa Kemal (Nicola A. Ziadeh, 1962). "The intellectuals, the bourgeoisie, the students and the proletariat reacted against the French administration and economic measures; they defended their right of work against the immigrants; they demanded legal equality with strangers; they wanted to maintain the principle of Tunisian sovereignty." The nucleus of the above nascent political party *al-Ittihad al-Islami* evolved into "The Evolutionist Party of Young Tunisians". Eventually it became simply *Tunis al-fatat* [Young Tunisians].

Yet loss of its leadership, due to the French crack-down in 1912, curtailed its effectiveness. Following the World War *Tunis al-fatat* developed into a loose term which encompassed a wide political-cultural spectrum of Tunisian opinion, from 'communists' to *les Vieux Turbans* [the Old Turbans]. In the 1920s there emerged its most vital, centrist element: a new alignment, the political party called *Destour* [Constitution]. The *Destour* "aimed to restore the Constitution of 1861" (Richard M. Brace, 1964). When the French army occupied Tunisia, few Europeans were resident there, most being from Italy. In 1884 there were 19,000 Europeans, the majority Italians. In 1901 Europeans were 111,000, including 72,600 Italians, 24,200 French, and 12,000 Maltese (Maltese-speaking from the nearby island, then a British colony). The French government soon sought to discover ways to increase the French population. Various incentives, chiefly economic, began to be offered to citizens who would relocate to Tunisia. Since France itself enjoyed a higher standard of living, to be attractive the incentives to potential settlers had to be quite substantial when compared to Tunisian incomes (Nicola A. Ziadeh, 1962). Ultimately, faced with simultaneous defeat at Dien bien Phu in Vietnam, and the upsurge of

revolution in Algeria, France agreed to the end of the Protectorate in Tunisia. In the decades-long struggle for independence, Neo-Destour leaders were able to gain independence for Tunisia by maneuver and finesse.

Throughout Africa, French rule was characterized by sharp contradictions between a rhetorical commitment to the "civilization" of indigenous people through cultural, political, and economic reform, and the harsh realities of violent conquest, economic exploitation, legal inequality, and sociocultural disruption. At the same time, French domination was never as complete as the solid blue swathes on maps of "Greater France" would suggest. As in all empires, colonized people throughout French Africa developed strategies to resist or evade French authority, subvert or co-opt the so-called civilizing mission, and cope with the upheavals of occupation. (Ruth Ginio, Jennifer Sessions, 25 February 2016.). The first nationalist party, Destour, was created in 1920, but its political activity decreased rapidly in 1922. However, Tunisians educated in French universities revived the nationalist movement. A new party, the Neo Destour, was created in 1934 whose methods quickly showed their effectiveness.

Police repression only accentuated the mobilization of the Tunisian people. The occupation of the country in 1942 by Germany and the deposition of Moncef Bey in 1943 by the French authorities reinforced the exasperation of the population. After three years of guerrilla, internal autonomy was granted in 1955. The protectorate was finally abolished on 20 March 1956. (). In fact, the country Tunisia has been the nexus of many different colonizations including those of the Phoenicians (as early as the 12 century B.C.), the Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, various Arab and Berber kingdoms, and the Ottomans (16th to late 19th centuries). (www.cia.gov › the-world-factbook › countries Tunisia - The World Factbook, May 26, 2023).

This among other occurrence of the pre-colonial and colonial eras caught our attention in the history of the country which is very interesting when studying the entire History of the Arabs in North Africa to the end of colonialism during the second half of the 20th Century characterized with the Cold War tensions of the capitalist and communist blocs backed by the United States of America and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (Russia dominated). The two superpowers were never colonial masters of any African country but having different interpretation of granting independence to Africans by the Western European powers whose neo-colonial ambitions later promoted series of social, and political upheavals in the decades the follows. This open new avenues to further researchers on those post-independence uprisings in the Maghrebians during the 21st Century.

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- [en.wikipedia.org > wiki > Governorates_of_Tunisia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governorates_of_Tunisia) Governorates of Tunisia - Wikipedia, Tunisia is divided into 24 governorates (wilayat, sing. wilayah). This term in Arabic can also be translated as province or federated state (though the latter does not apply, as Tunisia is a unitary state).
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- -Several Tunisian nationalists, including Bechir Sfar, Abd al-'Aziz al-Tha'alibi, Abdeljelil Zaouche, and Ali Bash Hamba, established the Young Tunisians movement and founded the weekly newspaper *Le Tunisien* in February 1907. The French government banned the newspaper, *Le Tunisien*, in 1908. [en.wikipedia.org > wiki > Category:French_residents](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:French_residents)Category:French residents-general in Tunisia - Wikipedia
- The French colonial empire in the Americas comprised New France (including Canada and Louisiana), French West Indies (including Saint-Domingue, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, Tobago and other islands) and French Guiana.
- The French colonial policy brought tremendous changes in the social life of people residing in multinational Tunisia, including Greeks. The decade between 1920 and 1930 marked a series of reforms in the governmental structures of Tunisia.

These events also affected Greek residents in Tunisia.

- The French conquest of Tunisia occurred in two phases in 1881: the first (28 April – 12 May) consisting of the invasion and securing of the country before the signing of a treaty of protection, and the second (10 June – 28 October) consisting of the suppression of a rebellion.
- The French protectorate of Tunisia (French: Protectorat français de Tunisie; Arabic: الحماية الفرنسية في تونس *al-Ḥimāya al-Fransīya fī Tūnis*), commonly referred to as simply French Tunisia, was established in 1881, during the French colonial Empire era, and lasted until Tunisian independence in 1956.
- The French protectorate of Tunisia (French: Protectorat français de Tunisie; Arabic: الحماية الفرنسية في تونس *al-Ḥimāya al-Fransīya fī Tūnis*), commonly referred to as simply French Tunisia, was established in 1881, during the French colonial Empire era, and lasted until Tunisian independence in 1956.
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- The protectorate (1881–1956) Tunisia became a protectorate of France by treaty rather than by outright conquest, as was the case in Algeria. Officially, the bey remained an absolute monarch: Tunisian ministers were still appointed, the government structure was preserved, and Tunisians continued to be subjects of the bey.
- Thus, in February 8th of 1958, French planes illegally flew above Tunisian soil and flattened the town to rubble, leaving only devastation and death. Nothing was spared, even the school full of children attending their morning classes was targeted, and this bombing ended up costing the lives of more than 70 Tunisian civilians and Algerian ...
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- Tunisia became a French protectorate when the Treaty of Bardo was concluded on 12 May 1881. This treaty allowed France to control certain geographical areas under the guise of re-establishing order and protecting the Bey from internal opposition, and also allowed French diplomatic agents to protect Tunisian interests in foreign.
- Tunisia became a protectorate of France by treaty rather than by outright conquest, as was the case in Algeria. Officially, the bey remained an absolute monarch: Tunisian ministers were still appointed, the government structure was preserved, and Tunisians continued to be subjects of the bey. [link.springer.com › chapter › 10 Tunisia and Morocco under French Protectorates | SpringerLink](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-007-5000-0_10)
- Tunisia has been the nexus of many different colonizations including those of the Phoenicians (as early as the 12 century B.C.), the Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, various Arab and Berber kingdoms, and the Ottomans (16 th to late 19 th centuries).
- Tunisian independence was a process that occurred from 1952 to 1956 between France and a separatist movement, led by Habib Bourguiba. He became the first Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tunisia after negotiations with France successfully had brought an end to the colonial protectorate and led to independence.
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