



On the policy of "yellowing" the strength of the French Far East Expeditionary Force 2/2

to the creation of the Vietnamese National Army during the Indochina War - BRENNUS 4.0

le commandant Yvan Cadeau du Service Historique de la défense

Published on 23/05/2019

Histoire & stratégie

Beginning in the spring of 1947, and despite initial opposition de Leclerc a year earlier [8] the first troops from the north -and African women disembark in Indochina Their share will only increase (60,000 soldiers from sub-Saharan Africa and 130,000 North Africans fought in Indochina between 1947 and 1954). In spite of this new addition, the strengthening of the adversary and the "hardening" of the war imposed a more massive recourse to indigenous soldiers, to the extent that one could speak of "over-yellowing" which, in some countries, was the result of the "over-use" of indigenous soldiers. units may call into question its operational character.

Malappreciates the repeated calls from the command to those in charge the danger and the loss of efficiency that this may cause. too much reliance on hastily formed troops, the situation will not change. Thus, at 1er As of 1 January 1954, the actual Aboriginal populations exceed the cumulative total of Aboriginal combatants. other origins in engineering (5204 to 4884), in the train (4303 versus 4160) or in airborne troopstees (5546 versus 5400) In the artillery, the proportion is 5496 natives versus 8281 for the rest of the staff, from same as in ABC, a more technical weapon where the report is of 5929 Aboriginal people versus 9365 Europeans and Africans.

If recourse to the Vietnamese and, to a lesser extent, the Cambodians and Laotians, allows the expeditionary force Extreme French-Orient, to carry out and at a minimum the missions entrusted by the command and gives him, in challenge the means to "last", it doesn't solve anything about the problems of a political nature. In this perspective, only a strong Vietnamese state allied with France, benefiting from a popular support and an army capable of defending its interests, would be in a position to challenge the legitimacy claimed by the Vietnamese-Minh. At the international level, this measure perwould also silence the charges against of France accused - sometimes rightly - to keep under a another forms his colonial enterprise. French government successive cries like the authorities in charge in Indochina... understood this from the very beginning of the war and after many mistakes and prevarication, manage, after many mistakes and prevarication, to make between 1947 and 1949, the "Bao Dai solution", i.e. the resettlement to the power of the ex-Emperor of

Annam. This resimperial tauration, which goes hand in hand with the unification of the Vietnam (something denied in Vietnam-Minh in 1945-1946). From a point of view, it is hoped that the creation of the Vietnamese State would provide an army capable, in the short term, of taking the fight against VPA in hand. France, while maintaining his interests in his ex-boyfriends-Asian possessions, could then to disengage from the war - which is putting a considerable strain on the the country's finances, and repatriate his troops. The withdrawal of the body would then make it possible to modernize the the French army as the combination of its resources between the European theatre of operations and North Africa - where the independence movements (particularly in Algeria and the Morocco) are becoming more and more virulent in their resorts. dications.

On the 2nd July 1949, the State of Vietnam is officially proclaimed. Within the French government, one is delighted - « We are finally out of the tunnel " proclaims, in Saigon, the Minister... of the French Overseas-sea, Paul Coste-Floret on the 20th of the same months. In the following weeks and until the end of the year In 1949, some thirty conventions were signed that formalized and materialized transfers of sovereignty in a number of areas. In Laos (convention of 19 July 1949) and Cambodia (treaty of 8 November 1949), negotiations led to the same "independence" process as in Vietnam . On 29 January 1950, the French Parliament ratified the agreements with these three countries, which officially became "associated states" within the French Union. On the following 11 July, a ministry in charge of relations with the associated states was created and entrusted to Jean Letourneau. Its mission was to implement the agreements signed, but above all to ensure that they were limited and that the framework constituted by the French Union (created by the 1946 Constitution) was respected . For France, the Bao Dai "operation" was therefore a success, albeit a laborious one. Thanks to the creation of the national army, trained and supervised by CEFEQ soldiers, the chances of defeating the Viet Minh within a reasonable period of time seemed real at that time. Indeed, this was the real reason for the Emperor's return: to install Vietnam in the war, under French leadership. Bao Dai and the troops he is preparing to raise must contribute to the successful conclusion of the conflict, because on the ground, troops are lacking and the fight against the Viet Minh is not making any significant progress.

The establishment of the Vietnamese national army

Until 1948, there was no organization in Indochina the armed forces of the Future Associated States. In Viet-nam (as in Cambodia) of military-type formations are well established with the return of the French, but they only depend on regional authorities. As of In June 1948, the situation changed and the Vietnamese authorities (which are acting pending the conclusion of the «Bao Dai solution solution"), take under their direct control a number of units: the movement is now launched. After months of discussions, the Vietnamese get satisfaction and, on 1er January 1949, the Vietnamese army sees officially on the day. It then totals about 25000 men: 15000 regulars and 10000 surrogates. In order to ensure In support of these forces, the expeditionary force is detaching 1,000 officers and under-officers, while the Vietnamese provide them, 2000 officers and under-officers from their the vast majority of the OEFC. As the increase in training the need to continue, it seems essential to create a body to develop and organize the liaison between this fledgling army and EMIFT, it's done. with the creation, on 8 March 1949, of the French Military Mission in France. It's near the Vietnamese government (MMF/GVN). The the notional number of personnel for this mission will never be reached. since officers and troops are directly drawn from the CEFEQ[9]. Many of the corps chiefs see leaving with regret their best people assigned to the young person's education Vietnamese army. In fact, the establishment of an army raises important financial problems. and instruction (and equipment) that the CEFEQ makes the best of it by detaching thousands of its soldiers. with the formations of the associated States.

The build-up of the Vietnamese Armed Forces (VAFN) continued in 1950, but the inability to provide troops with the necessary equipment and material caused a slowdown in the development of Vietnamese battalions. In November, the Dalat Conference between Bao Dai and the French Minister for Relations with Associated States in November set out the principle of setting up four divisions to which should be added elements of reorganisation.^[10] At this date, however, the existing forces were essentially composed of infantry even if some artillery batteries and cavalry squadrons existed. As reported by a French officer in charge of the organization of the armies of the associated states, without support and backing, the whole still "does not have the physiognomy of a modern articulated army"^[11].

If the efforts undertaken at the end of the 1940s make it possible to in Vietnam to have an army embryo, that's real. The policy undertaken by General de Lattre and the assistance the military that he gets from the Americans who are accelerating the creation of new Vietnamese units and their integration in a homogeneous and coherent institution. On the 1st January 1951, shortly after he took command, de Lattre expresses its willingness to create a permanent secretariat at National Defence (SNS) responsible for, among other things, "... to study the organization of Indochina in times of war, the mobilisation of people and resources"^[12]. The latter becomes thus the Commander-in-Chief's working tool for the military studies considered at the government level of the State of Vietnam. The personal action carried out by de Lattre in favour of Vietnamese youth^[13], the promise of the rapid arrival of American equipment and the greater involvement of Emperor Bao Dai in the conflict, finally bore fruit and, on 1 August, de Lattre's personal action in favour of the Vietnamese youth^[14], the promise of the rapid arrival of American equipment and the greater involvement of Emperor Bao Dai in the conflict, finally bore fruit. In 1951, the infantry battalions entering into the organic composition of the four Vietnamese divisions envisaged by the Dalat Conference were a reality; the Vietnamese National Army (NVA) finally took shape^[14].^[14] Six months later, on 1 January 1952, its strength reached 128,000 men (71,000 regulars and 57,000 auxiliaries) and continued to grow in the following months.

In fact, if General de Lattre did indeed give the impetus to the development of the national armies from the beginning of 1951, the effects of its combined action with American deliveries were not fully felt until 1952. At that time, the NVA is acquiring states-majors (general and military regions), and is developing organizations that aim to increase self-sufficiency... the crumb of the young army. In 1953, the young army was reinforced even more so with the formation of the light battalions known as the *kinh quan*^[16] totaling 40,000 more fighters. The objective of these TDKQs is to have lighter units, more rustic, adapted to the terrain, experienced in the processes of combat led by the Vietnamese-Minh, and animated by a "faith" and of a patriotic spirit higher than most of the formations regular. At the time of the cessation of hostilities, in August of July 1954, the FAVN totalled 272,000 men (229,000 regular and 43,000 alternates) to which should be added 5,000 sailors and airmen^[17]. Appreciation of the value of the Vietnamese national army.

Generally speaking, judgments against the national armies -mainly NVA- and their soldiers are negative. Albert Merglen, who fought in the 2e foreign parachute battalion (2e BEP) noted in April 1953 that "from a purely military point of view there's no comparison between the Vietcong and Bao Dai cadres. The Viet really does have the best of youth: energetic officers capable, capable, very patriotic. As for the Viet high command, it's remarkable, there's no other word". A year earlier, on March 15, 1952, he wrote in his diary: "We don't see any Bao Dai soldiers... [sic] stampede the assault with great courage, but the Vietcong recognized it. It sounds like the"^[18].

For the historian Michel Bodin, "the elders of the corps dispatched do not keep a good impression of the *troupe nationale*". As for Robert Guillain, correspondent for *Le Monde*, he is even more definitive. Three weeks after the fall of Diên Biên Phu, he wrote: "We

missed the Vietnamese army [..]. In the general mess, there are, it is true, exceptions, [but], with a rotten regime, no valid army" [19]. 19] The criticisms levelled at the armed forces of the Associated States and their soldiers by their counterparts in the expeditionary force are, in fact, very numerous. While praising the individual qualities of the Vietnamese combatant - courage, robustness, resistance to fatigue, sense of use of the terrain, skill and discipline - critics denounce the shortcomings of the whole. The weak combativeness of the troops, the mediocrity of the Vietnamese leadership, or the little faith or "mysticism" (the term is often used) brought into the fight against the Viet Minh are pointed at. Admittedly, the Vietnamese cadres are insufficient in number, most of them are of bourgeois and urban origin; they know "little about the people of the rice field under their orders [and] conversely, the man in the ranks - especially if he has previously been under the orders of French officers - often has little confidence in his young Vietnamese officer. But the Vietnamese Army is a young army that lacks experience and, as the value of the Viet Minh Army shows, the Vietnamese nationalist soldier, if he lacks a priori military training, can make an excellent fighter. In fact, the level of these national armed forces depends largely on the morale of the Vietnamese nation and its investment in the conflict.

However, in this area, it is necessary to recognise that the national armed forces are not only a source of strength, but also a source of weakness. The lack of enthusiasm of the population as a result of the wait-and-see attitude of the elites and the government. This problem of political advantage that military General de Lattre will attempt to solve it by implicating Bao Dai in the war and could be born there a relative failure. Thus, if the 15th July 1951 the emperor the "general mobilization", the measure does not have in the facts that a limited scope the fact that thousands of conscripts not present them to the recruiting offices and pass them - rights from which the sons of notables or functionaries can benefit. to be born totally discredit her. Out of 100,000 conscripted conscripts waiting due less than 10% answer the call. The question of effectiveness of the Vietnamese army appears in fact closely related to the political problem. Vietnamese decision-makers have it easy to make nationalist outbidding, denouncing a France taking back with one hand what she was giving with the other. (an accusation that has its share of truth), they do not generally invest enough of themselves - even in the development of their army, leaving it to the French to supervise it and to the Americans to equip him.

In the report prepared as part of the Lessons from the Indochina War [20] Captain Prestat is delivering some interesting... elements to understand the mistakes made by the French and the reasons why he believes the Vietnamese government has failed in the creation of its army, the main one being to avoid not to have succeeded. "the adhesion of the youth" [21]. For the author, the poor executive recruitment process and the over-representation of the public. The NVA's rapid development has led to many changes in the way the NVA operates. accounts: «After the promotion of some former military personnel of the French army, the selection of future executives was essential. The only way to ensure that this is the case is to ensure that, from 1951 onwards, university diplomas of a highly questionable value are awarded. The time allowed for basic training was nine months for active officers, six months for reserve officers, i.e. similar to those granted in France to young men from a much more rigorous selection process, who immediately found their place in a stable and undisputed hierarchy. In Vietnam, as a result of the late and precipitous expansion of the Vietnamese Armed Forces, some officers found themselves three years after their release from the army. At the head of battalions or territorial sectors three years after leaving school, the only subordinates were young sub-lieutenants who had just graduated from the Military Academy" [22].

The policy known as "yellowings", namely the integration of Aboriginal soldiers in the Expeditionary Force, was dictated by operational needs and by the problems of the the budgetary

challenges faced by post-war France.-war. It did, however, to some extent allow the CEFEQ to fulfil its missions. It is thus possible to determine whether the mandating how the French command could have the to be carried out without this local input. Pure considerations-the military who are behind the "yellowing"himself. However, they are not in line with the French political will to involve the State of Vietnam in the war, an involvement requiring concretely the creation of a national army. The exThe transferee therefore transferred, from 1949 onwards, certain units to the to the new NVA and detached to its states-majors and battalions, several thousand of its own cadres. By definition...the end of the conflict, in spite of the many criticisms made by theand the shortcomings of this young army, it seems that it was that time was on its side and, at the time of thesa-the hostilities, its formations had recorded prosome sandstone. Thus, in the first quarter of 1954, a study on the Vietnamese army reports that out of 171 battalions... infantry, 29 were in training, and of the 142 of the remaining 21 (14%) were rated very good, 64 (45%) good, 43 (31%) fairly good and 14 (10%) fair; the quantity of frames the result since the French equivalent does not affect the result since the French equivalentto one third of the management in each of the units.[23]. The experience of the Indochina war shows that the bet to put in place a national army certainly takes time, but also a real political investment with no backward step-thoughts on behalf of all the nations involved in the the struggle of a common adversary.

[8] This opposition is based on three arguments. Firstly, Leclerc wishes first of all to avoid xenophobia from the Vietnamese-against the riflemen from sub-Saharan Africa.-safari jacket - conscripted into the French army in a manner generic "Senegalese riflemen". Then he hears at at the time not to give in to American critics, who were denounce French colonialism and the use of troops to restore order in the Far East.-Orient. I mean, he It is also a question of preventing the dissemination of new ideas. and revolutionaries among African fighters.

[9] The WMW/GVN represents 4514 men in 1952 and 4360 in 1953, i.e. an average deficit of 20%. [10] General de Lattre de Tassigny later proceeded to several modifications of this Dalat program. The number and the composition of the Vietnamese divisions evolving.

[11] SHD. GR 10 H 981. The Vietnamese Army from 1949 to Jancirca 1954. Lieutenant's report-Colonel Viala, ex-head of the section "organization of the armies of the associated States". Without date, presumably the end of 1954.

[12]Ibid.,

[13]Action symbolized by its appeal to the youth of Vietnam. in his long speech at Chasseloup High School...-Laubat of Saigon, July 11, 1951: « Be men, it's-à-say: If you're a Communist, join the Vietcong...-Minh, there's-down individuals who fight well for a bad cause...e. But if you are patriots, fight for your country,for this war is yours.... Young men of the elite viet-nameuse [...] the time has come for you to stand up for your country ", quoted in Jean Ferrandi, French officers facing the Viêt-Minh 1945-1954, Fayard, 1966, p. 265-276.

[14] At that time, the concept of division as a large unit tactical unit is abandoned, it now represents only one entity, the practical logistical entity to deal with equipment problems and of equipment with the United States-United. The 1re division is located in South-Vietnam, the 2nde at the Centre-Vietnam, the 3e to the North-Vietnam, and the 4e division is that of the Southern Mountain Countries (SMC). The divisional concept is also replaced by that of themobile group ,more adapted to the form of combat in Indochina.

[15] On that date, the total number of employees in the French Union wasover 400A thousand men. These forces are, however, extreme.However, these forces are extremely composite and unequal in value, with the majority of the is, moreover, dispersed -and immobilized- across all territories of Indochina. The national armies represent 147000 soldiers against 257000 for the expeditionary force. Of this total, only 69% of the Frenchmen in metropolitan France are000 (17% of the total workforce), or 52000 men for the army, 6800 for the Air Force and 10200 for the marine. See SHD. GR 10 H 261. Meeting of 12 January 1952 chaired by General Allard on the occasion of the visit to Indo-china of the members of the Assembly's Finance Committee in the presence of Mr Pineau (Member of the National Assembly) and Mr Pineau (Member of the National Assembly). Sarthe, SFIO), Frédéric-Dupont (MP for Yonne, Republican independent), Moreau (Member for Paris, RPF).

[16] Their full name being Tieu Doan Kinh Quan (TDKQ) or «light battalions».

[17] The Lao National Army (ANL) is also developing in 1953. It reaches a little more than 20000 men when-that the Geneva Agreements have been signed, a figure that is substantially equivalent to the strength of the Cambodian army.

[18] Albert Merglen, The birth of mercenaries...Arthaud, 1970, 275 pages.

[19] Robert Guillaing, "The Failure of the Vietnamese Army", Diên Biên Phu, the end of illusions. February-July 1954Arlea, 2004, p. 170-177.

[20]The Lessons of the Indochina War, preedited by Ivan Cadeau, Defence Historical Service, t.1, 2010 ; t.2, 2013.

[21] SHD. GR 10 H 982. Department of National Defence and military - War. State-major of the army. Cabinet. Section "Morale». N° 351. Teaching the Indo Warchina. Captain Prestat's report.

[22]Ibid.,[23] SHD.GR 10:241. MMF/GVN/Colonel. Study on the arVietnamese army, doc. cit.,

Title :	le commandant Yvan Cadeau du Service Historique de la défense
Author (s) :	le commandant Yvan Cadeau du Service Historique de la défense
Release date	22/05/2019
