



Army Reforms since 1970

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Valeurs de l'Armée de Terre

Two white papers in five years, and then a new transformation of the Army that goes "Contact!". This acceleration of change may, if we are not careful, lead us to believe that it breaks with a long period of stability; on the contrary, the evolution of the Army is an ancient process, witnessing "that there is nothing constant, except change" [1], and that if we don't adapt, we are quickly overwhelmed. A look at the last forty-five years illustrates this.

In order to go beyond a chronological description of the reforms, presented in the annexes, the author's approach is to look at the causes that motivate these changes. Some of them are the result of a strategic breakthrough, or are the result of a firm will, while others finally respond to a capacity problem. Knowledge, will and power: Marshal Foch's principles show, finally, that there is a certain durability.

1] Words attributed to Buddha addressed to his disciples.

Strategic ruptures

Overall, we can give four: the end of the colonial wars, the multiplication of operational commitments, the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the rise of terrorism.

- As early as 1972, the wars in Indochina and Algeria The first "white paper", which belongs to the past, focuses on nuclear deterrence, in a defence logic that is primarily oriented towards the East. It takes up [1] and sets three strategic functions at the heart of its work: to provide sanctuaries (nuclear deterrence and

territorial defence), to participate (manoeuvres **in** Europe) and to intervene (actions **outside** Europe). This "nuclear effort" will lead to a precarious situation for conventional forces, which will result in conscript demonstrations in Draguignan and Germany.

- Still in the spirit of confronting the forces of the Warsaw Pact, but also because operational commitments are multiplying (1978: BONITE in Zaire, TACAUD in Chad and UNIFIL in Lebanon; 1979: BARRACUDA in the Central African Republic; 1982: EPAULARD followed by the Multinational Security Force in Beirut (FMSB); 1983: MANTA in Chad), the Rapid Action Force (FAR) was created in 1984. With 47,000 professionals, the FAR relies in particular on the air-mobile division (DAM), whose role is to oppose the Pact's operational manoeuvre group (GMO). The FAR is rapidly becoming "the tool for African projections". It was then composed of five divisions: 4th ^{DAM}, 6th ^{DLB}, 9th ^{DLBIMa}, 11th ^{DP} and 27th ^{DLBIMa}.
- After the collapse of the USSR in 1994, taking advantage of the lessons learned from the 1991 Gulf War, France published a second white paper which abandoned the logic of bipolar East-West confrontation and took into account the increase in military operations. Four strategic functions are now included: deterrence, prevention, **action and protection**. The rediscovery in Iraq of the joint forces and the need for modularity has led to efforts to update operational functions, particularly intelligence. EMIA[2] (later to become EMIAFE[3]), COS[4], DRM[5] and CID[6] are created. The Army increases its capacity to project heavy means, is structured on a mixed base ? half conscripts, half enlisted ? and acquires a projectable force of 120,000 men. General Monchal, CEMAT, sets up for this mixed army the idea of a "differentiated operational readiness", the DOD, which allows the implementation of a national service shortened to ten months.
- The last strategic break is that of the blurring of the boundary between defence and national security concepts; and. It is in the face of this reality that the 2008 white paper reacts, breaking with the theory of circles (initiated with the 1959 ordinance and taken up in the 1972 LB) and now speaks of arcs of crisis. Command structures are evolving to adapt to an engagement on national territory. If it is part of the post-September 11th 2001 period, this white paper also follows the movement of general revision of public policies and impacts the Army with the joint regrouping of support and the disappearance of specialised support brigades.

If the evolution of the strategic context obviously impacts the military tool, we must not neglect the effect of wills, expressions of the leaders' vision, which contribute to opening new paths.

The emanation of a will

Two types of will can be distinguished: that of the military leader and that of the politician.

- 1975: **Army General Lagarde (see box), less than** a year after his appointment as Chief of Staff of the In 1975, less than a year after his appointment to the post of Chief of Staff of the French Army, General Lagarde (see box) launched a series of reforms aimed at placing the triptych "one leader, one mission, means" at the

heart of the system. He **merged the operational and territorial chains of command**, placed the **service directorates under the command of the forces (return to the law of 1882)** and upgraded the **status of the personnel, taking into account** the alarm signal given by the Dracenois and German unrest (op. cit). To ensure the effective implementation of this last will, especially in the face of Bercy, General Bigeard (see box) was appointed Secretary of State for National Defence. With his character and strength of conviction, he won his case. General Lagarde suppressed the active forces of the territory, merged the army corps with the regions, the divisions with the DMT [7], made the brigade level disappear. He created a 3rd army ^{corps} at the Lodges camp and set up 15 "national" divisions, in quaternary mode and with logistical autonomy, which deviated from NATO standards. The lighting function changed from infantry to armoured cavalry, while the mechanised regiments moved in the opposite direction.

If the example of the "Lagarde reform" is undoubtedly the most emblematic example to illustrate the effect of a leader's will, others could support this part, which we cannot all cite. This is true even within reforms that other factors have imposed (e.g. capacity), and within which the will of a leader is required to draw new contours, such as the General Thomann at the command of the Land Action Force (2003-2005), as part of the separation of the operational and the organic, decided five years earlier.

However, since 1958, the head of the armies has remained the head of State; political will is therefore a determining factor in the evolution of the defence tool, including the army.

Generally speaking, it was under political impetus that military service was gradually reduced from 18 to 12 months in 1970 (Act of 9 July), then to 10 months in 1992 (Joxe Act). Finally, it was President Chirac's desire to have a fully professional army, in a form more suited to contemporary commitments, that led him to announce, on 22 February 1996, the suspension of conscription (made official by the law of 28 October 1997).

It was also a political will which, in 1990, introduced the "Armed Forces 2000 Plan" (presented to the Council of Ministers the previous year and adopted on 22 August). This plan largely returned to the Lagarde reform, imposing the return of services to the orders of the minister and regrouping entities. Thus, the three army corps were reduced to two more powerful ones; the regional command became interarmed and the 8th infantry division was ^{dissolved}, as well as several divisions of the manoeuvre corps.

Finally, it was again at the will of the President of the Republic that France returned to the integrated structures of NATO and had a corps headquarters certified in Lille in 2006 to NATO standards. This return will be effective in 2008.

While it is true that "where there is a will, there is a way", a certain principle of reality must also be taken into account when considering the logic of capabilities.

The capability issue

Napoleon Bonaparte carefully studied the means at his disposal before devising his manoeuvre; similarly, the impact of the resources that could be allocated to defence

plays a major role in the various reforms it is undergoing.

The decline in personnel numbers over the last 45 years illustrates this indisputable reality: the army had 325,000 soldiers in 1970, 288,000 in 1990 and 112 in 1990.000 in 2010 and 90,000 in 2014 (for more details, see the table of army personnel numbers, year by year since 1915, provided in Appendix 3).

At the Franco-German summit in Munich on 17-18 September 1990, President François Mitterrand announced his decision to dissolve the French Forces in Germany (FFA); although justified by the disappearance of the Soviet threat, this decision led to substantial savings. Indeed, although the FFA was replaced by the FFSA (French Forces Stationed in Germany) and then in 1999 by the FFECSA (French Forces and Civilian Elements Stationed in Germany), this measure resulted in the passage of 46.000 to 25,000 men and the dissolution of three divisions: the 3rd^{DB} in 1992, the 5th DB in 1995 and the 1st DB in 1997.

It is also with the aim of rationalization, and to adapt the structure of the Army to that of a fully professional army, that the decision was taken in 1998 to separate the operational from the organic. This measure led to the creation of the CFAT in Lille on 30 June and the Land Region Commands (resulting in a dual subordination of units). The disappearance of higher commands at brigade level led to a break with the divisional model in vogue since Guibert (1788). On the other hand, the concept of a force reservoir with four divisional headquarters (the force headquarters, EMF) was introduced. Finally, the need for modularity, which appeared with the Gulf, was reflected in the establishment of eight joint brigades and four specialised support brigades.

More recently, it is obviously in response to the economic and financial crisis of 2008 that a fourth white paper on defence and national security was published in 2013, only five years after the previous one. With priority given to debt repayment, the President of the Republic is accentuating his predecessor's desire to economise and is setting the tone for a new impetus for reforms, placing the logic of capabilities at the forefront.

What next?

The history of Army reforms since 1970 has just been globally reviewed through its dominant causes: It is obvious that the logic of strategic rupture, expression of will and capability limits can be found, in changing proportions, within the causes of each of the reforms presented.

The question now arises of the present and the future: what room is there for the expression of a military leader's will in a context where budgetary constraints remain, if not dominate?

The current "In Touch" reform provides the answer: the will of the leader is a decisive factor in meeting the new challenges facing the army, which is faced with both lasting capability constraints and a significant increase in its operational burden.

In this paradoxical context where two reform factors are at odds with each other (decreasing capability and increasing strategic capability), the Chief of Staff of the

paradoxical context, where two factors of reform are in conflict (capability decline and strategic increase), the Chief of the Land Staff has drawn up a reform plan that emphasises the operational aspect, while promoting human resources and materiel management.

Initiated by General Bosser upon his appointment, like General Lagarde forty years earlier, the "Au contact!" reform immediately reinforces the operational colour of the Army by relying on a more flexible and dynamic eight-pillar structure. Thus the "SCORPION Joint Force" is back in line with the divisional system, supported by the "Specialised Commands" and "Joint Training" pillars. The two pillars "special forces" and "air mobility" show the effort focused on high added value actions and the "human resources" and "maintenance" pillars show the importance given to human and material resources. Finally, the "national territory" pillar recalls the military vocation to protect France and the French people, including on their own soil when they are threatened.

Impelled by the will of the CEMAT in the summer of 2014, this reform gained additional impetus with the tragic events of January and November 2015. By triggering the "10,000-man contract", the terrorist attacks in Paris fixed for an indefinite period of time the level of the commitment of land forces on national territory, without, however, hinting at a reduction in overseas commitments, particularly in the Sahel, the Central African Republic and Lebanon.

On the basis of these **increased strategic requirements**, the action of **military leaders at the highest level made it possible to offset** the **mitigating** effect of **budgetary constraints by obtaining the recruitment of 11,000** additional **soldiers** into the land forces, thus breaking with a trend of almost continuous downsizing over the past forty years.

This look at the present time therefore shows that the will of the leader is, more than ever, necessary to triumph over the strategic and capability challenges facing the Army.

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APPENDIX 1

Liste chronology of army reforms since 1970

| YEAR | EVENT | HR IMPACT | IMPACT ORG |
|------|---|-------------------------------|---|
| 2015 | Plan "Contact!" Operation Sentinel (10,000 then 7,000 men deployed on the national territory in a prolonged manner), following the terrorist attacks of January 2015, shows the limits of the current format of the Army and leads to its revaluation. | Decision "+ 11,000 men". | Increase of the deployable land forces from 66,000 to 77,000 men. |
| 2013 | 4th White ^{Paper} : Reaffirmation of strategic ambitions in the face of evolving threats and constrained | LPM: - 10,000 h over 5 years. | Reduction of the projectable force to 66,000 men; reduction from eight to seven joint |

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| YEAR | EVENT | HR IMPACT | IMPACT ORG |
|------|--|---|---|
| | budgetary resources. Priority to debt repayment: defence is the third largest ^{State} budget. | | brigades. |
| 2008 | 3rd White ^{Paper} : Blurring the borderline between defence and national security. Return to NATO. RGPP and LOLF. This LB serves as a reference (it is a first) for the following LPM. | Continuation of post reductions | Eight joint brigades. Eventually (2012), 1,250 military personnel at NATO. Adaptation of command structures for a TN engagement. |
| 2006 | Certification of a corps level PC to NATO standards. | | Creation of the RRC-FR (1 October) CFAT's significant contribution to the creation of the CRR-FR. |
| 2001 | Effective and total end of conscription decree 2001-550 of 27 June 2001 | | |
| 1998 | Separation of the operational and the organic | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creation of the CFAT in Lille (30 June) - creation of the Earth Regions Commands - disappearance of higher command at the brigade level - creation of a force tank (4 EMF PC DIV) - concretization of the notion of modularity, which appeared after the Gulf War, with : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eight BIAs (joint arms brigades) - four BAS (specialized support brigades): B.TAC, B.RENS, B.ART and B.GEN. |
| 1996 | Professionalisation decision Announcement by President Chirac on February 22, 1996, then officialization with the law of October 28, 1997. | Decision " - 150,000 men in six years" (it is the figure of - 100,000 that will actually be achieved) | The throwing force goes from 10,000 to 50,000 men. |
| 1994 | 2nd White ^{Paper} six possible use-of-force scenarios. four strategic functions: deterrence, prevention, action, protection. Idea of pooling power in the context of European integration. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing the capacity to project heavy means. - Decision to have a projectable force of 120,000 to 130,000 men. - Decision to create a mixed army, half conscript based, half enlisted based. |
| 1993 | End of the FFA (French Forces in Germany) Announcement by François | | Dissolution of units (from 46,000 to 25,000 men in Germany): - 3rd ^{DB from} 1992, |

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Centre de doctrine et d'enseignement du commandement

| YEAR | EVENT | HR IMPACT | IMPACT ORG |
|------|--|--|---|
| | Mitterrand at the Franco-German summit in Munich on 17-18 September 1990 and official dissolution on 30 August 1993. Creation of the FFSA (French Forces stationed in Germany) then the FFECSA (1999: French Forces and civilian elements stationed in Germany). | | - 5th ^{DB in 1995} - 1st ^{DB in 1997} |
| 1992 | Military service is increased to 10 months (Joxe Law). | | |
| 1991 | Gulf War Rediscovery of the joint and the need for modularity. | | Efforts were made in several areas, notably intelligence. |
| | Note: at the same time, suppression of the pre-strategic PLUTON force (which HADES was to replace) between 1991 and 1993. | | <u>Creation :</u> - of EMIA (later to become EMIAFE), - of the COS, - of the DRM, - from the CID. |
| 1990 | Plan "Armies 2000" Submitted to the Council of Ministers on 26 July 1989 and adopted on 22 August 1990. Vision of an army "simpler, more coherent and more efficient" according to the ministerial slogan of the time | Decision "- 35,000 men in four years" (it is the figure of -48,000 that will actually be achieved) | - Return of the services to the Minister's orders: the "Armées 2000" plan largely returns to the Lagarde organisation (end of the triptych "one leader, one mission, means"). - Regrouping of the armed forces (the three boards are grouped together into two more powerful boards). Dissolution of the 8th infantry division. - Inter-armament of the regional command. |
| 1984 | Creation of the FAR (Force d'action rapide): ability to engage "fast, strong and far". Adopted on 20 May 1983 with the 1984-1988 MPL, the RAF is a decision of Minister Hernu. | | Professionalization of several formations to reach the objective of a RAF of 47,000 men. The FAR headquarters moved to Maisons-Laffitte. - Its flagship tool: the 4th DAM ⁴ (air-mobile division) in Nancy, which is intended to oppose the GMO (operational manoeuvre group) of the Warsaw Pact. - 6th ^{DLB (Nimes)} - 9th ^{DLBIMa (Nantes)} - 11th ^{RFP} - 27th ^{DIA} Note: the 3rd ^{Board of Directors} leaves Les Loges and moves to Lille where it merges with the 2nd region whose sustainability was threatened. |
| 1975 | CEMAT General Lagarde: | | - Removal of active forces from |

| YEAR EVENT | HR IMPACT | IMPACT ORG |
|---|-----------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - merging the operational and territorial chains of command; - replacement of the service directorates under the command of the forces (return to the law of 1882); - upgrading of the status of personnel <p>In short, "one leader, one mission, means".</p> | | <p>the territory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Merger of the corps with the regions - Removal of the brigade level - Merger of divisions with DMT - Creation of the 3rd^{army} corps (at the end of the reform, 1979, merged with a regional command) at the camp of the Lodges. - creation of 15 "national" divisions, in quaternary mode, with logistical autonomy, moving away from NATO standards. - changeover of the "lighting" function from INF to ABC and of the mechanised regiments from ABC to INF. <p>No major impact. Note: CEMA commands DOT (operational territorial defence) and becomes CEMGA in case of war. NSTR</p> |
| 1972 1 st White Paper Promotion of strategic independence, codification of nuclear deterrence. | | |
| 1970 Military service increases from 18 to 12 months Law of 9 July 1970 | | |

APPENDIX 2

Por go further

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1) From the Order of 7 January 1959.

2) EMIA: Joint General Staff.

3) EMIAFE: Joint Force and Training Staff.

4) COS: Special Operations Command.

5) DRM: Directorate of Military Intelligence.

6) CID: Collège interarmées de défense, which succeeds the École supérieure de guerre and will become the École de guerre in 2011 under Minister Alain Juppé.

7) DMT: Military Territorial Division.

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