



The place of the military in society: a multiple question

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L'Armée de Terre dans la société

Trying to give an objective and simple answer to the question of the place of the military in society is a delicate exercise. For this question is biased ...

The first bias is that of the meaning to be given to the word "place". Some will want to replace it with the word "role"; others will be tempted to reason in terms of influence. But very quickly concepts such as image, trust or recognition will come to tint the reflection with more diverse expectations.

It is, more globally, the testimony of a certain form of consideration that is at issue: that granted by a society that is becoming more and more sensitive to the fact that the military institution is at the service of the common good, even to the point of sacrifice if necessary; which stands in sharp contrast to the rise of individualism or consumerism...

The place? . It is the reflection of different sensibilities according to perceptions. But it is also a potential trap in our debate, because one can benefit from a very good image and find oneself marginalized in the decision-making processes and in the strategic thinking of the Nation... And depending on the angle of attack of the question asked, the answer will be more or less positive.

The second bias is more categorical in origin: an officer or a non-commissioned officer will be able to reason their place in terms of the power exercised, the responsibilities entrusted to them; whereas a non-commissioned officer will see it more related to his professional status, his level of remuneration ...

The place to be held is the place one wishes to have in the life of the city, in an association, in a sports club, in a class council, in a co-ownership syndicate or in one's

parish. Military personnel are very dissimilar from the moment they leave their professional sphere; and it is not abnormal that the place they wish to take in the civilian world should be marked by this diversity, according to their aspirations. This question cannot therefore be dealt with solely through the prism of the General Land Officer, otherwise it would be very simplistic...

A third bias concerns the perception, or the meaning given to the word society. Should we oppose civil society and military society? If it is a question of considering society as a whole, should we think that the military can really hold a special place in it? In fact, what do we want to deal with? The place of the military among the country's elites, their rank in the civil service, their influence with the media, their relations with the educational world?

For "society" is a bit of all of these: the public and the private, the business world and the voluntary sector, political life and the family sphere. Society is the school, the town hall, the church, the rugby club and the bar in my village! Society is in fact all the areas of relationships that can be maintained outside the military institution. It is therefore also a notion of extreme diversity ...

The last bias is that of the affective. It is expressed more or less strongly depending on the generation, or on the integration of the soldier in his garrison environment, but it is always present. In these questions of place or role, the soldier is always tempted to put the feeling: Do people know me? Do people understand me? And, above all, do they love me?

Questions are necessarily reductive; they have potentially negative effects... Because they lead to the acceptance of a certain marginalization: I am left out of the affairs of the city, I am kept at a distance from decision-making circles, I am rarely consulted, my republican loyalty or my loyalty is suspected, I am denied any form of participation in public debate, I am opposed to the duty of reserve when I express myself.... but my fellow citizens love me! As a soldier, I inspire them respect and trust. And that is enough for my happiness!

This is the famous, so simplistic, reply of Rambo at the end of the film of the same name: "What I want, what all veterans want, is that our country loves us as much as we love it! »

In the end, this issue could take as many headlines as there are sensitivities in our community:

- The general officer and the elite of the nation
- The military and the city.
- The soldier and the associative world.
- The links with the world.
- The officer, the politician and the diplomat.
- The warrior and the media.
- The image of armies in public opinion.
- The armed commitment in the heart of the French...

The choice of texts selected by the G2S had to reflect these differences of appreciation.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, it is intended to reflect the many ways of approaching this existential question for the military, that of its place in society.

For it is basically the question of their raison d'être: how can they set themselves up as intransigent defenders of their country, as protectors of their fellow citizens, as guarantors of freedom and democracy, for the benefit of a community in which they have not been able to find their place?

Happy reading.

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