



The military specificity

Thoughts for the Army of Tomorrow

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L'Armée de Terre dans la société

A soldier cannot be entirely a citizen like any other. That is why we can only agree with the opinion of Lt. General Alain Bouquin (2S) who advocates the maintenance of a number of measures that anchor our specificity.

To claim in 2018 that an army of excellence must have retained all the ingredients that underpin the military specificity of its members may seem like a truism. And defending this point of view is sometimes considered superfluous... so much has already been said on the subject!

However, military leaders, when they speak out, like to recall with great constancy the existential nature of this notion.

The CEMA, at the National Assembly on 21 February (2018), rightly pointed this out:

"... I would like to mention the need to preserve the military specificity which [...] can be achieved by certain transformation projects. It is the subject of my full attention; [it] is very directly linked to the use of force, i.e. the obligation of armies to use force deliberately. »

The CEMAT, in a recent article in Le Figaro says nothing else:

"The primary purpose of the army, its fundamental character, is the defence of the Nation, by arms, in a methodical and organised manner. It is from this purpose that we must think of the military specificity. »

This insistence of our great leaders is not insignificant: if we must tirelessly talk about specificity and defend it, it is because it is both unavoidable and undoubtedly threatened.

In fact, military specificity is based on a corpus of special rules, linked to the employment of military personnel, grouped together in a specific status, and intended to allow their engagement in conditions that are those of warlike action, without the possibility of withdrawal. They are the result of experience and recognised by law. They oblige the soldier, in particular to be immediately and permanently available, and to be disciplined. They determine the very nature of his vocation.

Why is it vital for us soldiers to have such specific rules? It is because there is a fundamental difference between us as soldiers and many others! Death is an integral part of the exercise of our "profession": death given, on order, and death received, accepted in advance. "Death in combat is not an occupational accident," General BOSSER reminds us. And the President of the Republic, during the ceremony of tribute to Colonel BELTRAME, reiterated this with a beautiful simplicity in the wording: "Accepting to die so that innocent people may live, such is the heart of the soldier's commitment." »

What characterises the use of armies even more is the notion of "ultima ratio": the last resort when other means have failed, within a very specific legal framework, which can override the right to self-defence in the use of force. This clearly distinguishes us from the security forces. It is unique, and it alone underpins the need for an appropriate status.

The day when these extreme perspectives should be erased from our collective frame of reference, our army would lose part of its *raison d'être*. For they determine "everything else": the principles, attitudes, convictions and moral references that make up our effectiveness and guide us in action: discipline, availability, moral force, spirit of sacrifice... Specificity is thus not incidental, "to do better": it is the essence of our know-how, of our organizations, of our functioning.

Neither corporatist nor elitist, it is not a form of identity withdrawal; it is simply the basis of the values that are intended to irrigate our community to enable it to act according to its purpose.

Nor is it a pretext for "staying among the military" and abusively claiming total functional control of the responsibilities to be held within the ministry: it is more prosaically the observation that, in war, "specifically military" personnel are needed to carry out the tasks required in a "specifically warlike" framework.

It is not an anachronism, a form of behaviour which was appropriate in the great wars of the past and which would have become obsolete in contemporary conflict contexts; it is what, at any time and in any place, enables the soldier, on solid legal grounds, to use force to protect his fellow citizens.

Society must accept the risks it entails. And in particular, it is not because the soldier is a citizen in arms that a poor transposition of ordinary law, through misunderstood or poorly applied judicial systems, should hinder his action.

It is for all these reasons that it is necessary to recall with perseverance the inevitability of

this for the exercise of the profession of arms. For there are many attacks on specificity, tempting in various ways, and sometimes not without malicious intent.

Rampant civilization, outdated subjection, trivialization... the military specificity is an old lady who can in turn disturb, be instrumentalized or serve as a repellent. She can even occasionally be presented as a danger and stigmatized: isn't she essentially reactionary?

The CEMAT answered these questions very clearly:

"... to assume this military specificity in all its dimensions is a crucial issue, as well as an essential condition for having the first European army, in the service of our freedom and that of France . »

Those of us who have experienced these demands in our own flesh and blood can only agree with this assertion: military specificity is indeed one of the major elements that determine the rank of our army on the international stage. As such, it must be jealously guarded as a sine qua non for operational performance .

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