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Academic Degree in France Military Profession
Officer Graduated: A Professional Group in the Marge

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Academic Degree in France Military Profession
Officer Graduated: A Professional Group in the Marge¹

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Abstract

Ten years ago, France has settled deep reforms of its public's policies and modernization of the finance laws. For the Armed Forces, it was a way to come back forward soldier's basic goal: training and learning for war, surrounding missions been performed by contractors. At the same time, challenges appear for the military administration: rethink officer's career, increase the academics level in military academy and reinforce the professional identity. At the same time, a small group of officers identifies as "extra small in the Army", getting doctorate appears as a professional group in the marge. Doctorate, as high academic diploma, takes away them of the fight dominant standard. So the graduated officers are seen as a social group outside of the system of the military values. When you analyze the officer social and military trajectory, this one is not only professional, it is also determinates by biographical dimension revealed by qualitative approach.

Keywords: norms, career, identity, diploma, officer, profession

¹ This paper is based on results coming from: Axel Augé, *Arms and Pencils [Les armes et la plume]*. Rennes: Rennes UniversityPress, 2017.

Introduction

The transformation of the culture's officers in France constitutes research issues for the military social sciences. Although the military sociology are interested in several themes, during the last forty years², in United States starts with the issues of social portrait of officers; in France, the researches of military sociology renew the studies on the evolution cultural of the army, in particular on the socialization of the cadets in Saint-Cyr military Academy³, the military identity of international era or officer's education. If those studies have given useful knowledges on the internal dynamics of the officer's corps, we have little information on link between officer's professional courses, the professional standards and their doctorate; even if CristelCoton⁴ study on officer's cultural practices delivers news knowledges. The issues on cultural resource in military professional and social era are unusual in particular if we focus on the social and cultural integration for the graduated officers in profession dominated by "officer's graduated war college".

In the same time, Master degree from Paris's War College⁵ is become essential to be promoted in officer corps. None Lieutenant-Colonel cannot be promoted Colonel without War College's Master. If we consider the scholar military system, the master degree value academic is being better: since 2002, with Scholar's reform, Saint-Cyr delivers a master degree with academic high value. However, small group of officers will graduate from public university, even if civil degree is not efficient to accelerate the military career.

The "Paris's War College" (or *Military School*) is a French institution for military higher education. Teaching is selective, diversified, and focused on joint warfare, international relations and planning. Candidate students are recruited by competitive examination, each promotion featuring nationals of over 70 countries. Once admitted, they are trained to assume staff positions in their armies of origin, in joint staffs, on interallied staffs, or any other position where

² Morris Janowitz, V *The professional soldier. A social political portrait*, New York, Free Press, 1960; Samuel Huntington, V *The soldier and the State. The theory and politics of civil-military relations*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957; Charles Moskos, *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today's Military*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1970; Charles Moskos, (With Wendell Bell), "Cultural Unity and Diversity in New States," *Political Sociology*, Vol. 66, no. 8, pp. 679-694, 1965.

³ Saïd Haddad, «Introduction: Les sciences sociales du militaire ou la nécessité d'un dialogue interdisciplinaire», *Dynamiques Internationales*, numéro 11, janvier 2016, *numéro thématique Varia Militaris* Pluralité et diversité de la sociologie et des sciences sociales du militaire. [www. http://dynamiques-internationales.com/](http://dynamiques-internationales.com/); Claude Weber, *A genou les hommes, debout les officiers, la socialisation des Saint-Cyriens*, Rennes, presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012; Christophe Pajon, «Identités militaires et relations internationales : éléments d'un dialogue», *Dynamiques internationales*, ISSN, revue électronique, 2105 2646, 2016.

⁴ Cristel Coton, « *Briller sous l'épaulette, Capital culturel et capital combattant dans le corps des officiers de l'armée de Terre* », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*. 2012/1 n°191-192, pp 14-27.

⁵ Essential for training and scholar, Paris's War College trains in one year the future direction military corps, identifies the most promising elements and participates directly in the international relations of armies.

defence policies are crafted and implemented. Attendance to the school is usually a necessary step for achieving field officers positions. With the reforms of the military career, there is a competition between the qualified officers of Paris's War College and officer's university graduates, named "outsiders" in French Army.

This article analyzes these outsiders, our social and cultural resources, hierarchical organization of the normative field in the military profession. It focuses in particular the links of dependence and conflicts between the bulk of officers providing from "Paris's War College" and those graduated from civil universities. There is a cultural gap between, these two groups of officers: a part of the officers consider themselves as radical professionals, the others as the pragmatic professionals, according Huntington's theoretical models. In fact, the building of career reveals various professional identities strengthening by cultural resource as diploma (Master or Doctorate degree), Paris's War College diploma. In that point of view, professional career must be seen as global and social process. Professional career is not only based on professional norms, but also on biographic dimensions.

Who are the officers who are consider as an outsider of the group by Paris's War College graduated? Who are those officers getting diploma in public college? How do you understand the signification of the practice for this small group of officers? What are their individual strategies to insert in professional field dominated by War College graduated? Our hypothesis is that social implicit standards exist; they are based on the school level from War College. They are organizing the military profession and its social representations. That social logic creates implicit social hierarchical. It creates also a social tension in military profession. Finally, this study shows the knowledges of the academic skill.

After presenting methodological approach, I share my paper in three parts. First, I have a presentation about professional's course focuses on internal dynamics. In that logic, five professional courses emerge after empirical investigation. These courses are based on specific resources which organize them: be promoted in military field, graduated to reconvert in civil professional career, graduated to assert, the role of fulfilment, graduated to acquire a military's skill. Secondly I analyse implicit professional norms which organize military field, in particular, the officer corps in French Army. Thirdly, I have discussion on the group in the marge, meaning the group does not belong from the military profession.

Orientalism

Our analysis is based on a qualitative, quantitative, multi-sited study that was carried out from February 2011 to December 2013. The empirical investigation starts in 2011 and closes in 2013. The French Army counts approximately 115 000 men and women, 12 790 professional's officers, 36 650 non-commissioned officers and 62 570 soldiers.

We have three panels:

- The first one is based on 395 officers graduated from civil university, master degree between 1979 and 2013.
- The second corpus is based on 54 officers graduated. They have their PhD coming from several social sciences and mathematics. Among officers, 30 have been interviewed.
- The third is qualitative. It counts 76 officers. It adds 54 officer's Ph. D. graduated and 22 officer's master degree graduated.

Two panels used for quantitative approach, in particular for statistics analysis, the third served to biographical interviews for qualitative approach. These panels help us to build the sociological portrait of officer looking for academic diploma.

The qualitative approach by interviews foregrounded graduated officer's sociological profile. Semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations at meetings of Joint Staff in Paris were enriched with participant observations at Saint-Cyr Military Academy's scholar administration. Further pieces of information were provided by non-participant observations at meetings in which officer graduated, member of scholar administration participated. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews with Joint Staff scholar's administration officer permitted me to situate participant observations in the broader context of military culture.

In total, 30 recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted, the majority of them, face-to-face, and they lasted from 45 minutes to one hour. Longer interviews were rather rare, and they included substantially longer off-the-record parts.

Getting information on career during survey, several places have been investigated: home, office and major general staff –Joint Staff. The criteria of the panel interviewed is *school criterion* (Master or Doctorate), *military criterion* (be an active officer), *professional criterion* (be in the second part of career). The multi-sited collection of data (Military Academy, Joint Staff) helped to explore common patterns in military profession.

Additionally, I reviewed Internet Websites, newspapers articles and informal discussions.

As Denzin⁶ said about technical methods, the validity of the qualitative research was increased by data and methodological triangulation. Those triangulated data have produced professional course marked by personals and biographies stakes.

⁶ Denzin (N-K), (1970), *The Research Act in Sociology*, Chicago: Aldine.

Professional’s Courses and Sociological Models

Five professional’s courses emerge from empirical investigation. The type 1 concerns graduated to be promoted in military hierarchical. The type 2 is graduated officers for a civil professional career. The third professional course is based on graduated to assert, the fourth is graduated who want to accomplish themselves; and the last group is graduated to acquire military skills.

Table 1. Professional Course and Reference Model

Professional’s courses	References Models
Type 1 <i>Graduated to be promoted in military hierarchical</i>	Model to reconvert
Type 2 <i>Graduated to reconvert for a civil professional career</i>	
Type 3 <i>Graduated to assert with the high level culture</i>	Self fulfilment Model
Type 4 <i>Graduated to accomplish himself</i>	
Type 5 <i>Graduated to acquire military’s skills</i>	Institutional Model

Graduated to be Promoted in Military Hierarchical

The first course brings together 26% officers panel interviewed, coming from Saint-Cyr Military Academy and Interarms Military School. This panel is mixed. In that group, the degree is a sign of distinguish in officers group. Their position is higher than officer without degree. For those officers, the motivation to graduate is linking to their failure at Paris’s War College Master. They decide to graduate because they did not get their War College’s Master. The challenge for them is that if the officer is not recognised by the grade, he will be acknowledged by their degree. The stake is getting internal promotion in professional field. Finally the logic is based on internal dynamic.

For example, this professional course concerns Bernard’s course in this personal history:

Born in Saint-Brieuc (Western in France), Bernard is 43 years old at interview. He is graduated from Saint-Cyr Military Academy and got a Master from Rennes University. In 2001, Bernard decides to get doctorate in Rennes University. He is seen as an outsider according his military colleagues, far from military traditional socialization based on military family, military high school and religious education. After failed in War College is coming back in Saint-Cyr Military Academy as professor of law. With his doctorate, Bernard got a new skills and he is recognized as a “good officer”. He is head of the law and political science department”. It is for him a good professional situation.

During information's collect, another interviewer gave that response:

With the civil degree, I'm good now in my service. Even if some of people in army doesn't like civil degree, academic degree is again looked for most of officer.

Graduated to reconvert in Civil Sector

Let's take a look at graduated officers for a civil professional career. This panel is composed by 21 percent officers interviewed. For them, degree is seen as a new tool to move forward in the civil professional sector. Their choice is graduating to reconvert in the public or private sector. It is based on personal strategy because they want to reconvert into civilian's organization. They know that they will not be promoted in military system because unsuccessful military formation.

Paul, born in 1969, lieutenant-colonel said:

I was in uncomfortable professional situation. I stay for a long time in my professional position with any progress. The most interesting for was to leave army and go to the civilian sector. It was a very difficult decision. Bit with my degree, it's was more easy to look for job. I would like to change my life, my professional life.

The speaker clearly describes the opportunity associated to the degree as personal strategy of professional reconversion.

Degree as Sign of Distinction

The third panel represents 23% interviewed officers. Unlike previous panel, all of panel's officers come from Saint-Cyr Military Academy. University's degree is a personal choice to preserve general culture high level. Many of these officers have higher social expectations. The military degree is necessary but not sufficient. They are looking to expand their horizons on the war, not just to fill the time, but to learn a new skill. In that point of view, diploma is seen as prestige new symbolic source.

A speaker, colonel said during collect information:

[Culture is essential to be a good chief. It's better to get degree when an officer want to access to the high level of command].

The interviewer said that degree draws two camps in the "officer world":

[us and the other officer without any academic degree].

Since ten years, several military camps have closed with restructuration and reforms. This fact has grown up competition and concurrence in officer field to

integrate high command position. In that course, the degree is a symbolic capital important.

Graduated to Accomplish Himself

Other officer group refers officers graduated to accomplish themselves. There are 17 percent in global panel. Degree appears as tool for self-fulfilment and it is based on personal strategy. Being graduated is associated as a personal pleasure, without any institutional stake. Many of those officers had no training at all. This group of officers gets diploma for their own pleasure.

Graduated to Acquire Militaries Skills

The last group introduces institutional degree as a stake. It's all brings together 13% of this own panel and show that graduated officer to acquire military's skills. The majority of individual in that panel is Lieutenant-Colonel or Colonel without Paris's War College degree. For them, civil degree appears as a new way for professional course. The Army is looking for their technical skills sectors. The officers are looking together those necessary skills for military administration or operational uses.

Implicit Professional Norms in French Army

As any occupation, in French Army, military profession is organized around professional values and norms. These values (or norms) produce a dominant normative era associating professional identity.

According Samuel Huntington theoretical model, two normative systems patterns appear. The first one is based on officers who consider that warrior's values are central as point of their professional identity. This officer group is identified as traditional professional. It is composed by officer coming from Saint-Cyr military academy, male and Paris's War College graduated. This group has a strong religious practice. His members are catholic for the greater part. Their professional identity is marked by cavalry or artillery. They defend a traditional warrior values based on heroism, patriotism and Christian values on social life. Finally their professional identity is radical. They consider that "*Officer doesn't need doctorate to make war and be courageous*", according person interviewed during study.

In military profession, another social group exists: the professional pragmatic. This model coming from Morris⁷Janowitz's survey. It defines a professional officer group with course marked by civil diploma. In that group, the professionalism is pragmatic; pattern of culture is near from civil society and technical models are dominated.

⁷ Morris Janowitz, op.cit.

“The military profession is not a monolithic power group. A deep split pervades its rank in respect to its doctrine and viewpoints on foreign affairs⁸”.

“That professionalism view gives an open pattern of the military identity. In fact, officer’s model integrates some of officer portrait is link with civilian values: manager officer, diplomatic officer or technician officer. As Janowitz said, the military professionalism is not monolithic. There is different way to be officer according the importance of the technical values or heroic values”.

The Marge and the Centre: The Group Does not belong from the Military Profession

The careers articulate with the standards of the military profession. Each officer got a specific relationship with the pattern of cultural profession. The typology of the career is interesting because it underlines gap between professional groups. Careers are indeed determinate by importance individual value given. If officer organizes his career with doctorate or Master's degrees, he goes away from fight central normative values. So that, careers based on civil diploma delegitimize officer in professional era, surely for traditional officer. Finally, high diploma brakes down professional identity:

“War needs heroism, courage, patriotism, not really degree. Diploma is necessary to reconvert in civil sector or to technical occupation in army. You know, fight is fight”, said a Colonel.

According to interview’s speech, professional identity does not follow the same way. Pragmatic identity built by all officers who not getting Paris’s War College diploma. Traditional identity concerns all officers with graduated in Paris’s War College. Combat is a central dimension of military professionalism. The notion of social world⁹ is interesting to understand these logics.

The military professional field is marked with the power of struggle around norms and values. The academic degree from lieutenant-colonel officer relegates him outside of his professional field. This professional group is in the marge, of the military value system. Their academic title appears, in the speeches, as potential dangers of the traditional military identity. They are outsiders, in particular in military profession where professional skills are dominated by fighting spirit associated to traditional identity. For traditional officer, radical professionalism attached:

⁸ Morris Janowitz, op.cit.

⁹ Rue Bucher et Anselm Strauss. «*La dynamique des professions*», *La trame de la négociation*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1992, p.68.

“The Centre of our profession is to destroy enemy. It is not with master degree that you can do that! So its truth, modern soldier needs academic knowledges and technical skills. But it is enough. Not more. Modern soldier needs basic culture to fight. But soldier, any officer needs endurance, force and courage. These elements are useful to fight the asymmetric enemy”, said by Lieutenant-colonel met in Paris.

For the group coming from civil university with doctorate, degree contributes to produce new professional norms and an identity more opening toward civil society. Degree is a new tool to move forward in the civil activities to reconvert into civil organization. In that logic, doctorate integrates a personal strategy: if officer is not recognized by the military profession with his PhD, he will be then with his civil degree.

Conclusion

The professional norms who participate to produce a social space are occupied by actors' coalition which defends their interests. There is “social under group” in military profession, each group getting his own values, norms, patterns of professional culture. Each group defends his interests, norms and their own relationship with the military culture. The military profession has several “social under group”.

Finally, officers have various requests of social gratitude. The different professional norms participate to create a military identity. In that survey, we are able to show that the officer wants to be known according to his capacities. The Army is one corps, a collective corps, but the social's demands are individuals.

The military structure, as social structure, determines officer professional's course. When officer said “it is my personal choice”, behind assertion we have an unexpected event such as injury, families' problems, to enhance a breakdown career or be recognised with degree.

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