



An unstable equilibrium: Civil-military relations within the French Ministry of Defence

Antoine Maire & Olivier Schmitt

To cite this article: Antoine Maire & Olivier Schmitt (2022): An unstable equilibrium: Civil-military relations within the French Ministry of Defence, Journal of Strategic Studies, DOI: [10.1080/01402390.2022.2127090](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2022.2127090)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2022.2127090>



Published online: 26 Sep 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

ARTICLE



An unstable equilibrium: Civil-military relations within the French Ministry of Defence

Antoine Maire ^a and Olivier Schmitt ^b

^aCenter for International Studies, Sciences Po, Paris, France; ^bCenter for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

Abstract

French civil-military relations under the 5th Republic are marked by the imposing figure of the President, because of their role in nuclear deterrence. In that context, the role of the ministry of defence in general, and of its leader (the minister) in particular, is ambiguous: the minister is technically not the highest authority in charge of defence issues (since both the Prime Minister and the President are constitutionally tasked with important responsibilities in the defence realm), but they nevertheless need to find a role between the presidential guidelines and the military demands. In this article, we show that civil-military relations within the French ministry of Defence are therefore characterized by an “unstable equilibrium”: the history of the French MoD is rife with regular swings between the primacy of the military or the primacy of civilians. Overall, the French MoD has adopted a model civil-military relations which is structurally unstable, due to the shifting legitimacy of the military elite within the French bureaucracy and the importance of the personality of the political and military actors involved: without fundamentally altering bureaucratic rules and organization, the power balance between civilian and military actors can quickly evolve. To a degree, this shows the plasticity of French civil-military relations and its ability to adapt to the actors involved, especially the President.

Keywords France; Defence; Civil-Military Relations; Ministry of Defence

Introduction

French civil-military relations under the 5th Republic, which was established in 1958, are marked by the imposing figure of the President, because of their role in nuclear deterrence. The entire decision-making system is thus designed to grant a large degree of freedom to the President: ‘In addition to centralizing at the Elysée all the information and analysis channels available in the administration, the president is also the uncontested master of nuclear deterrence, the cornerstone of the system’.¹

CONTACT Olivier Schmitt  schmitt@sam.sdu.dk  Department of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark, Campusvej 55, 5230 Odense M, Denmark

¹Alice Pannier and Olivier Schmitt, *French Defence Policy since the End of the Cold War* (Abingdon: Routledge 2021), 14.

In that context, the role of the ministry of defence in general, and of its leader (the minister) in particular, is ambiguous: the minister is technically not the highest authority in charge of defence issues (since both the Prime Minister and the President are constitutionally tasked with important responsibilities in the defence realm), but they nevertheless need to find a role between the presidential guidelines and the military demands. In this article, we show that civil-military relations within the French Ministry of Defence are therefore characterized by an 'unstable equilibrium': the history of the French MoD is rife with regular swings between the primacy of the military or the primacy of civilians.² The MoD itself became a key player in the governance of French civil-military relations in the early 1960s, as the result of two main factors: the establishment of a strong executive power and the new centrality of nuclear deterrence. The end of the Cold War and the growing importance of foreign military interventions led to a change of paradigm: the President established a direct collaboration with the Joint Chief of Staff which led to the marginalisation of the defence minister. However, this evolution has fed a political controversy which finally led to another swing. The 'new governance' reform implemented in 2013, which we describe below, led to refocusing military staff on their 'core businesses' to promote the role of civilian actors within the ministry.

Overall, we argue that the French MoD has adopted a model civil-military relations which is structurally unstable, due to the shifting legitimacy of the military elite within the French bureaucracy and the importance of the personality of the political and military actors involved. A distinction is needed here regarding political control and institutional control. Political control is exercised by the President or the minister and is not questioned in the French system: there is a broad acknowledgement of the primacy of political authorities among the military, which is codified in law and enacted in practice. Yet, institutional control is marked by competition between civilian and military groups for influence over the decision-making process within the MoD. This article shows that institutional control depends on how political actors (from the President to the Minister) exercise their authority and the degree to which they recognize the military's legitimacy. Without fundamentally altering bureaucratic rules and organization, the power balance between civilian and military actors can quickly evolve, leading to a relatively unstable equilibrium. To a degree, this shows the plasticity of French civil-military relations and its ability to adapt to the actors involved, especially the President.

We argue that the competition between civilian and military actors is made more intense because of four shaping factors. Firstly, the peculiar role of the executive, and particularly the President, in the French defence

²Claude Carré, *Histoire du ministère de la Défense* (Paris: Lavauzelle 2001).

policymaking allows them to easily bypass the ministry of defence and its bureaucratic structure. The President can deal directly with defence affairs through the general chief of staff or their personal chief of staff. Second, the original organisation of civil-military relations is hugely influenced by nuclear deterrence and the obligation to preserve the freedom of the President in the decision-making process. Thirdly, the growing importance of military operations abroad has also led military actors to increase their influence with the French defence governance. Finally, the largely separate education and schools attended by civilian and military elites is detrimental to the cohesiveness of the ministry.

This article is divided into two main parts. The first section traces the evolution of the ministry of defence over time and details the evolving relationship between civilian and military authorities, showing how fragile equilibriums can be quickly upset by changing political circumstances. The second section zooms in on the case of Professional Military Education (PME), which is an excellent example of the constant challenge for the military to define the nature of their profession and to locate themselves within the French bureaucratic hierarchy.

The role of the ministry of defence in France, an old controversy

The issue of the control of military institutions became significant in France after the Revolution of 1789. The events led to the creation of a popular army, conceptualized as coming directly from the nation itself. Therefore, the armed forces were able to claim to be representative of the population and to promote the voice of the people. Subsequent events created a fear among political elites that the military could play a political role: the coup d'État of Napoléon in 1799, the Boulanger crisis and the Dreyfus affair in the late 19th century, or the Generals' putsch in 1961 are examples of events feeding this concern. It raised the question of how to manage the armed forces to ensure at the same time their effectiveness and their subjection to the legitimate political authorities. With this issue in mind, a lot of iterations marked the history of the French civil-military relations, which echoes the US debate between professional supremacists and civilian supremacists.³ When the former consider that civilians should not interfere in military affairs, the latter argue that the minister, often a civilian actor, should be an important component of the chain of command. The role of the ministry of defence is thus essential to understand how civil-military relations are organized.⁴

³Peter D. Feaver, 'The Right to Be Right: Civil – Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision', *International Security* 35/4 (2011), 89–97.

⁴Thomas Bruneau and Richard Goetze, 'Ministries of Defense and Democratic Control', in Thomas Bruneau and Scott Tollefson (eds.), *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations* (Austin: University of Texas Press 2006), 71–98.

The gradual emergence of the minister of defence as a political actor

The First World War was a turning point in the relationship between civilians and military officers in the conduct of defence policy.⁵ French authorities entered the conflict by conceding full autonomy to military officials to conduct the war. Yet, the mobilization of all the country and all its productive forces led to a greater implication of civilian authorities in the war. The conflict demonstrated the importance of the dialogue between civilian and military authorities and the need to create institutions that would enable civil-military relations to work properly.⁶ The post-WWI period paradoxically led to a step back in that regard.⁷ The national assembly tried to adopt a new law on the organization of the nation at war, but parliament members were unable to reach a consensus before 1938. In terms of civil-military relations, the post-war period was then a combination of different dynamics. One of them was an attempt to create a joint chief of staff for the armed forces. It failed due to the resistance of the navy and the air force, which feared being placed under the chief of the army. Another dynamic was the need to change the ministry of war to make it a coherent actor. Despite some interesting experiments, like the creation of the first ministry of national defence under the Tardieu government in 1932, sectorial ministries dedicated to each service branch was the most common organization during the interwar period. The situation remained partly similar during the post-World War II period and the 4th Republic. Indeed, if a minister for the armed forces was then regularly appointed, they were seconded by state secretaries or ministerial delegates with direct authority over the army, the navy, or the air force. The ministry for the armed forces was thus divided, and the minister was unable to play a real role within the defence sector. One of the lessons of the period was that the parliamentary system came with a weak executive power, leading to a weak defence minister. Such a configuration granted the military a large degree of autonomy in their sphere of responsibility.

Things changed with the institution of the 5th Republic in 1958. Designed to fulfil General de Gaulle's ambitions, it significantly strengthened the executive power: civilian control over the military was key in this new regime. However, the new Constitution created an ambiguous system for the defence sphere: the President was named chief of the armed forces, but the organisation of national defence was the Prime minister's responsibility. This is clearly an example of constitutional practice superseding the constitutional text itself. According to the Constitution, the President is the 'guarantor of national independence, territorial integrity and the execution of national

⁵Nicolas Roussellier, *La Force de Gouverner. Le pouvoir exécutif en France XIXe – XXIe siècles* (Paris: Gallimard 2015).

⁶Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership* (New York: The Free Press 2002).

⁷Philippe Vial, '1932–1961. Unifier la défense', *Inflexions* 21 (2012), 11–27.

treaties' (article 5), and is the 'chief of the armed forces. He presides over the councils and committees of national defence' (article 15). In turn, the government 'determines and conducts the nation's policies' (article 20) and the 'Prime Minister is the head of government. He is responsible for national defence' (article 21). However, the administrative system and the practice ensured the superiority of the President over the Prime Minister. Indeed, 'the Élysée is at the top of the intelligence chains on all topics of strategic interest: it receives daily telegrams from the different intelligence services, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The president also chairs the defence councils, which define the main orientations and policies'.⁸ Moreover, the president is also the cornerstone of the nuclear deterrence policy, approving equipment projects and strike plans, and bearing the ultimate responsibility to decide on an eventual strike: 'the presidential function is made sacred by the capacity to push the "red button". The entire organisation of the State is determined by this exclusive function'.⁹ In turn, the Prime Minister is constitutionally tasked with coordinating the government's actions in the field of security and defence, and relies to do so on the *Secrétariat Général à la Défense et la Sécurité Nationale* (SGDSN – General Secretariat for Defence and National Security). Consequently, 'the institutional configuration of French defence policy is then de facto dominated by the primacy of the president, which in practice validates presidentialism, while the constitutional text looks more like a dyarchy'.¹⁰

However, this practice was only cemented over time. The 5th Republic's first Prime Minister, Michel Debré, was unwilling to abandon his defence prerogatives. Yet, a changing and difficult context rapidly underlined the limits of this organisation: the armed forces were at the dawn of a major revolution.¹¹ The context was marked by decolonisation and the end of the Algerian war, and the putsch attempt in April 1961 was a reminder of the political role the armed forces could play which questioned the ability of the civilian authority to control the armed forces. On top of those disputes, the development of the French nuclear bomb was a game-changer in French defence strategy: while intimately associated with defence policy, nuclear deterrence nevertheless created opportunities to bypass the armed forces in the definition of military strategy. First, the costs associated with nuclear weapons development were drawn from regular military budgets, which led to a drastic reduction of the size of the armed forces: the army was for example reduced from 755 000 to 325 000 soldiers. Moreover, the new deterrence strategy changed the decision-making process within the ministry since it required establishing a direct chain of command between the

⁸Pannier and Schmitt, *French Defence Policy*, 14.

⁹Bruno Tertrais and Jean Guisnel, *Le Président et la bombe* (Paris: Odile Jacob 2016), 162.

¹⁰Pannier and Schmitt, *French Defence Policy*, 15.

¹¹Frédéric Turpin, *Pierre Messmer. Le dernier gaulliste* (Paris: Perrin 2020).

President and the armed forces. The whole organisation was then designed to maximize the presidential freedom of actions, since it was essential to ensure the effectiveness and the credibility of the French deterrence strategy.¹² In other words, the nature of the French nuclear deterrence strategy enshrined the supremacy of the President, in two ways. First, it established presidentialism in practice, limiting the Prime Minister's role. Second, it contributed to constrain the armed force's role to executors of a strategy decided by the Elysée, instead of shapers of the country's military strategy. With the issue of political control settled in law and practice by the Vth Republic, competition moved to the issue of institutional control within the MoD.

In 1961, General De Gaulle appointed Pierre Messmer as defence minister. To deal with the drastic changes triggered by the coup attempt and the nuclear policy, he asked for the implementation of an ambitious reform.¹³ Messmer suppressed the civilian ministerial delegates overseeing the services and branches, to ensure that the minister was directly linked with the armed forces. He also reformed the military command, which was previously divided between two chiefs of staff, one affiliated with the Prime Minister (MGDN), and one to the ministry for the armed forces (EMGFA). The prerogatives of the former were transferred to the latter. The new chief of staff was thus transformed into the main interlocutor for civilian authorities, the reform leading to the creation of the current joint chief of staff (CEMA – *Chef d'État-Major des Armées*). With this reform, the ministry for the armed forces got its current shape. Pierre Messmer organised the new governance around the leadership of three officials: the Chief of the Joint Staff (CEMA), the Chief Executive of the general delegation of armaments (DGA) and the Secretary-General for Administration (SGA). These three officials illustrate the hybrid civilian-military nature of the ministry's governance: while the CEMA is obviously a military officer, the DGA is a military engineer, and the SGA is a civilian. Those changes allowed the political authorities and the President to impose civilian control over the armed forces through institutional control within the MoD. Within this system, the minister is considered as the representative of the President, an organization that bypassed the Prime Minister.

The changes made within the ministry of defence were also implemented to turn the ministry into a political actor. The new minister, Pierre Messmer, was also careful not to rely too much on the armed forces regarding the decisions he had to make. This consideration was especially important at a time when nuclear weapons changed the philosophy of the French defence strategy. To make sure that he could balance information and proposals

¹²Samy Cohen, *La monarchie nucléaire: les coulisses de la politique étrangère sous la Ve République* (Paris: Hachette 1986).

¹³Pierre Messmer, *Après tant de batailles ... Mémoires* (Paris: Albin Michel 1992).

coming from the armed forces, the minister built a new institution directly under his authority: the centre for evaluation and foresight (CEP). Staffed with young and brilliant officers, engineers and scholars, the new centre had to produce an independent analysis and submit concrete proposals directly to the minister. The new institution played a key role in allowing the minister to affirm its role and authority over the ministry, specifically regarding nuclear issues: the competition for legitimate expertise about military strategy sometimes meant control over specialized knowledge structures.

The creation of the ministry of defence in France is thus the results of two convergent dynamics that shaped French civil-military relations. The first is related to the emergence of a strong executive power. It led to the structuration of a powerful ministry of defence, reducing the autonomy of the military and promoting stronger civilian supervision of the ministry, something Samy Cohen called 'the Generals' defeat'.¹⁴ The second dynamic is related to nuclear deterrence. It led to a deep reform of the armed forces and underlined the need for strong political control.

A powerful joint chief of staff & a marginalized defence minister

The fundamental structure of French civil-military relations remained unchanged since 1960 and the reform implemented by Pierre Messmer. However, the dynamics and the prerogatives of the main actors drastically evolved after the end of the Cold War. The growing importance of military interventions abroad after the Cold War led to a new evolution in the organization of French civil-military relations and triggered new rounds of the issue of institutional control.¹⁵

The participation of the French armed forces in the Gulf War (1990–1991) exposed several weaknesses regarding interoperability and military intelligence. It led to the implementation of an important reform program after the war geared towards increasing jointness.¹⁶ The reform of military intelligence, the suspension of military conscription and the reinforcement of the role of the joint chief of staff were a testimony to that evolution.¹⁷ A budgetary reform called the 'orientation organic law relating to the finance laws' (LOLF) also changed the elaboration of military budgets. The defence budget was no longer divided between the army, the air force, or the navy but between functional programs. It imposed to strengthen a unique actor to negotiate the budget, the joint chief of staff. This ambition was crystallised through the adoption of two decrees related to the power attribution of the chief of staff

¹⁴Samy Cohen, *La défaite des généraux* (Paris: Seuil 1994).

¹⁵Grégory Daho, 'A Revenge of the Generals. The Rebalancing of the Civil-Military Relations in France', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 13 (2019), 304–22.

¹⁶Olivier Schmitt, *Allies that Count. Junior Partners in Coalition Warfare* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press 2018).

¹⁷Bastien Irondele, *La réforme des armées en France: Sociologie de la décision* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po 2011).

in 2005 and 2009. In particular, the 2005 decree gave the joint chief of staff direct authority over the other chiefs of staff.¹⁸ It was at the time considered as a needed step to achieve complete jointness in the armed forces.

Nevertheless, the 2009 decree pushed the logic further, transforming the joint chief of staff into the key decision-maker within the ministry.¹⁹ In practice, the joint chief of staff was effectively in charge of military policy within the MoD. The main trigger for this evolution was the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as President in 2007, which led to what was called at the time a 'hyper-presidency', meaning the centralisation of all key decisions within the Elysée. Key public policies were mainly decided by the President and his staff, reducing the role of ministers within the government. The ministry of defence was particularly subject to such a tendency, since the dynamic described above related to nuclear deterrence already conferred the President a key role in defining the French defence strategy. The President appointed Hervé Morin as minister of defence: it was a political appointment because Hervé Morin was one of the leaders of UDF, a centre-right political party whose support was essential in the election of Nicolas Sarkozy. Yet, the distrust between Nicolas Sarkozy and Hervé Morin led the President to keep the upper hand upon the defence sector. As such, the President and the joint chief of staff developed a close working relationship which excluded the minister from the management of the defence sector. Unhappy with the situation, Hervé Morin asked for a rebalancing of the governance of the ministry. He proposed a new decree aiming at reducing the power of the joint chief of staff and repositioning the minister at the centre of the governance. However, he lost his arbitration with the President who did not want to renounce his direct oversight of the defence sector. Allegedly, Nicolas Sarkozy distrusted Morin and his advisers, and thought that military officers were more legitimate interlocutors on military policy issues.²⁰ The decree finally adopted thus strengthened the powers of the joint chief of staff, who received the means to deal with all the aspects of defence without having to refer to the minister. For example, he oversaw human resources, defence diplomacy and even communication. The then-chief of staff, General Georgelin, provocatively summarised the situation by saying 'the minister must give me the means to execute the orders I receive from the President',²¹

¹⁸Decree, 08/02/1982, « Décret n°82-138 du 8 février 1982 fixant les attributions des chefs d'état-major. » [Decree n° 82-138 fixing the attributions of the Chiefs of Staff], <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000516506&categorieLien=cid>.

¹⁹Decree, 15/07/2009, « Décret n° 2009-869 relatif aux attributions du ministre de la défense, du chef d'état-major des armées et des chefs d'état-major de l'armée de terre, de la marine et de l'armée de l'air » [Decree No. 2009-869 related to the powers of the Minister of Defense, the joint Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Navy and Air Force], <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000020857108&categorieLien=id>.

²⁰Interview with a former member of Nicolas Sarkozy's cabinet, 23 April 2022.

²¹Jean-Dominique Merchet, 'Le Ministère de la Défense Redevient celui de la Guerre', *Secret Défense*, 13 Sept. 2013.

thus relegating the minister to a support function and highlighting his direct relationship with the Elysée. The hyper-presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy facilitated the emergence of a hyper-chief of staff in the defence sector. It led to the marginalisation of the minister, deprived of the tools needed to play his role in the governance of the defence sector. Therefore, with simply one decree, the power relations within the MoD were drastically altered, illustrating the plasticity of the system and its ability to accommodate the President's preferred mode of governance.

Defence policy is sometimes considered in France to be an apolitical topic. However, the 2009 decree created a political controversy, with any observers considering at the time that it gave too much power to the joint chief of staff. The marginalisation of the minister of defence was also denounced as a dangerous evolution, which contradicted the normal functioning of republican institutions. The 2012 presidential campaign thus constituted a window of opportunity to question this evolution. François Hollande, the candidate of the *Parti socialiste*, and his defence advisor, Jean-Yves Le Drian, proposed a new agenda for the defence sector.²² They promoted the idea of a reform of civil-military relations and designed the reform to reaffirm political pre-eminence within the field of defence. According to them, the defence sector should not be a reserved domain of the President, but the minister should be able to assert their authority over the ministry. They also denounced a tendency to reduce the importance of civilian actors in the ministry, to the military's benefit. In a context marked by a tight budgetary context, François Hollande affirmed its ambition to reposition military staff on their so-called 'core business', meaning military operations. According to him, the place of civilian actors should be increased in the ministry for positions that do not encompass a military speciality, for example in communication, finances, human resources, international relations, or support: here again, we observe the underlying issue of defining the legitimate expertise of civilian and military actors, which is translated into issues of institutional control. François Hollande won the Presidential election in May 2012, and appointed Jean-Yves Le Drian as Defence minister, who was charged with implementing this reform program.

A new governance to ensure "political preeminence" over the defence sector

The so-called 'new governance' reform implemented in 2013 offers an interesting example of how a ministry of defence can switch from a military-dominant to a civilian-dominant paradigm. Implemented by the minister

²²François Hollande, 'Perspectives de défense nationale', *Revue Défense Nationale* no 749 (Apr. 2012), 23–28.

and his cabinet just after they arrived at the hotel de Brienne, the reform changed daily routines and the power-sharing agreements between the minister and the joint chief of staff.

To reassert its power over the ministry, Jean-Yves Le Drian decided to assemble a 'combat-proven cabinet' to implement the reform and to assert his authority over the ministry. The Le Drian's cabinet was composed of actors who knew each other very well and who had worked together during the presidential campaign, an incongruity for most cabinets. The cabinet took over the ministry with a clear working plan. A clear affirmation of the new power of the minister, claiming his ambition to 'be the master in his own home', marked the first days of the new cabinet. This ambition was affirmed and shared with all the actors, specifically with the joint chief of staff. Inspired by how large corporations are run, the new cabinet implemented a reform directly inspired by the private sector, for example by rejuvenating the executive committee created by former minister Hervé Morin, which was transformed into the main instance for decision-making. It brings together the ministry's key officials and meets once a week. Without any change to the legal framework, the new cabinet was thus able to quickly assert its authority over the ministry. It demonstrates the role of the cabinet as a key actor for the animation of civil-military relations.

Later, the minister also considered that it was important to change the 2009 decree to trigger the rebalancing of power relationship within the ministry. The cabinet wrote a new decree giving the minister their place back in the chain of political responsibilities in terms of employment of the armed forces and intelligence. Compared to the 2009 decree, the decree adopted in 2013 transferred the responsibility for the employment of the armed forces from the joint chief of staff to the minister.²³ It also specified that the minister is responsible for foreign and military intelligence, in order to reaffirm the minister's authority over the intelligence community associated with the defence sector. The minister was thus repositioned as the key actor for the governance of the ministry, making it clear that the joint chief of staff should directly refer to him.

The third aspect of the agenda implemented by the cabinet was a major reform of the administrative structures of the ministry. The cabinet had two main objectives. The official one was to increase the efficiency of daily operations and to reduce budgetary spending. A 2011 report from the ministry's control authority had noticed that the joint staff tended to create unnecessary positions, in effect duplicating structures within the MoD.²⁴ The

²³Decree, 12/09/2012, "Décret n° 2013-816 relatif aux attributions du ministre de la défense et du chef d'état-major des armées" [Decree n° 2013-816 related to the powers of the Minister of Defense and the joint Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces] <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000027945471&categorieLien=id>.

²⁴Nathalie Guibert, *Qui c'est le Chef?* (Paris: Robert Laffont 2018).

hidden objective was to achieve the initial ambition of the cabinet and to assert its authority over the ministry and the armed forces. The reform was about transferring key functions previously assigned to military actors to civilian actors: human resources, finances, supports, international relations, communication, and maintenance. This transformation was portrayed as having the objective of allowing the armed forces to focus on their 'core business': preparing for and waging war. For example, the general secretary for the administration, led by a civilian, received responsibilities regarding human resources, finance, and communication, previously assigned to the joint chief of staff. The joint chief of staff also lost the responsibility for international relations. It was given to a new institution established in 2015, the general directorate for international relations and strategy (DGRIS).²⁵ The DGRIS is led by a civilian, here a diplomat (thus from outside of the MoD) and was also tasked with the elaboration of defence strategy. This move was another round of the competition for expertise between civilian and military actors within the MoD. To fully understand the dynamics between civilians and military officers within the MoD, it must be noted that the French public service system is composed of civilian generalists, in principle able to work in almost all ministries. This is particularly true for support functions (such as human resources, budgets, finances, communication, etc.). Yet, there exists career paths for civilian public servant specializing in the field of strategic studies: the French civil service has maintained a tradition of expertise in that field (due to the combined effect of being a nuclear power and membership of the United Nations Security Council), with specialized tracks existing for example in the diplomatic service with the *Direction pour les Affaires Stratégiques et le Désarmement* (DASD – directorate for disarmament and strategic affairs). For example, the two (so far) appointed directors of the DGRIS have been diplomats with a strong DASD background. Moreover, generalists can decide to specialize themselves in security policy, for example by spending their whole career at the MoD.

The creation of the new DGRIS is a good example highlighting the ambition of the cabinet with its reform and the tensions it has created with the joint staff. The idea behind the creation of the new DGRIS was to assemble all the functions related to international relations and strategy within one functional, thus coherent, institution. The ambition was to improve the coherence of French defence international actions and to reduce the number of staff involved. The chief of staff was, after a long bargain, partly deprived of its international relations department, some of its agents being transferred to the new DGRIS. Only six years after the 2009 decree that put them on top of

²⁵Decree, 02/01/2015, "Décret n° 2015-4 fixant les attributions et l'organisation de la direction générale des relations internationales et de la stratégie du ministère de la défense" [decree n° 2015-4 fixing the attributions of the general directorate for international relations and strategy of the ministry of defence]. <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000030026918>.

the system, the chief of staff was again constrained within the MoD through Minister Le Drian's preferred governance and through the creation of new institutions such as the DGRIS, illustrating once again the flexibility of the system. Yet, the creation of this new institution fuelled a lot of tensions with the chief of staff, because of an unclear delimitation of responsibilities.

An example of this ambiguity is the issue of defence diplomacy and military cooperation. Defence diplomacy covers all the dialogues and strategic exchanges about defence issues when military cooperation is about concrete exchanges between French armed forces and foreign partners. The distinction is, of course, not as clear as it looks on paper. The bargaining process that followed the creation of the new DGRIS was about which parts of military cooperation and defence diplomacy should remain under the authority of the joint chief of staff. Behind the semantic debate laid the question of authority and responsibility. For example, defence attachés, previously handled by the joint staff, have been assigned to the DGRIS.

A similar debate arose regarding the formulation of defence policy within the MoD, which led to split responsibilities. In principle, the DGRIS is responsible for the elaboration of defence strategy (Strategic Review, White Paper) while the chief of staff keeps the upper hand on operational planning and the elaboration of the military planning law (LPM). However, here again, the unclear areas of responsibility between the civilian-led DGRIS and the military-led joint staff lead to frictions. Indeed, the formulation of defence strategy must consider operational planning, and vice-versa, and many issues do not fall neatly in one category or the other. Therefore, many small-scale coordination or jurisdiction issues routinely emerge between the joint staff and the DGRIS. On a day-to-day basis, these tensions are manageable, but they are magnified in the case of a major event such as the war in Ukraine initiated by Russia in February 2022. Following the invasion, both the DGRIS and the joint staff have created working groups analysing the conflict and its strategic and operational consequences. However, the work of those groups tends to overlap, and the DGRIS as well as the joint staff compete for the attention of the minister's cabinet, leading to major tensions between the chief of the joint staff and the head of the DGRIS: separating defence strategy and operational planning is easier done in principle than in practice.²⁶

Hence, the creation of the new general directorate for international relations and strategy offers a good illustration of the tensions that the new governance reform has fuelled. This opposition is interesting because it underlines a broader controversy within the ministry about what the military status means and what military staff's core business is about. This is an old debate in France about the specificity of the military profession and the

²⁶Interviews with civilian officials and military officers from the DGRIS and the joint staff, March-April 2022.

perceived risk of the 'civilianization' of the ministry, which is itself related to the debate between military or civilian primacy. The opponents to the reform formulated three main criticisms. The first was about the import of managerial technics from the private sector. According to them, these technics do not fit with the specificity of the military status. The second criticism targeted the notion of 'core business'. Military opponents to the reform saw this term as a denial of the complexity of their job. They opposed the idea that military activity is just about expertise in how to use weapons. On the contrary, they argued that the success of a military operation is also about preparation, training, intelligence, and diplomacy. They argued that without being able to control all the aspects of their mission, the authority of the military commandant was weakened. The third criticism was about the risk of seeing civilian actors making decisions regarding the employment of armed forces. This fear has led military actors to develop resistance strategies to protect what they considered vital to their activity. Those strategies forced the actors to reach a new organisational compromise during the implementation of the new governance reform. For example, civilian actors gained greater responsibility in the elaboration process of the defence strategy, but planning remains the private preserve of military staffs. In addition to this civilian-military divide, professional military education (PME) also offers an interesting insight regarding such debates and the compartmentalisation they create within the organisation of the ministry.

Professional military education: A military or civilian responsibility?

Unlike in countries such as the United States or the United Kingdom, adopting a strategy of civilian academic accreditation is not a way for French PME to have military and civilian elites share similar educational backgrounds. This leads French PME institutions to be simultaneously wary of civilian academic influences while desperately trying to be recognized as elite-training organizations. At the same time, the operationally focused culture of the French armed forces tends to disqualify academic and intellectual training: French PME is thus caught between contradictory impulses, which has an impact on civil-military relations within the Ministry.

Training the civilian and military elites: Disjointed paths

To understand the first factor shaping civil-military relations in the French PME system, it is important to contrast the training curriculum of the administrative and military elites. French public and administrative elites overwhelmingly come from a small number of ultra-selective elite schools or '*grandes écoles*'. For the initial training, Sciences Po (in the social

sciences) and Ecole Polytechnique (engineering) constitute an important social marker of belonging to the elite. An extra layer of elitism is added by the attendance of the *École Nationale d'Administration* (ENA), of which the alumni have a direct access to the highest positions in the French civil service system. The legitimacy of the system does not lie in the quality of the training provided in those schools, but rather in their hyper-selectiveness which confers a degree of prestige to those who attend them and facilitate the building of professional networks.²⁷ In that regard, France starkly differs from other countries in which prestige lies not only with selectivity but, first and foremost with the quality associated with a specific curriculum: elite-training institutions such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard or Yale (to name a few) are world leaders in research and education, which is not the case for French elite schools. Although the French system of elite schools is problematic (notably in terms of efficiency, social diversity, and groupthink effects),²⁸ it nevertheless confers high social prestige (and guaranteed power positions), which explains its resilience. It also leads to a *de facto* marginalization of universities (where research activities are conducted), which have almost no role in elite training and selection.²⁹ As the military sociologist Bertrand Boëne explains: 'the French administrative elites, who graduated from the *grandes écoles*, are only rarely exposed to research in their curriculum. (...) They are cautious about the social sciences, potentially critical, and about academics, too independent'.³⁰ In short, the French education system markedly differentiates between the 'power schools' and the 'intellectual schools'.³¹

In that context, French PME is, for its most prestigious track, organized in three levels.³² Level 1 is basic officer training, which is done in each service by a dedicated school (*Saint-Cyr* for the Army, *École Navale* for the Navy and *École de l'Air* for the Air and Space Force). Officers are commissioned as lieutenants with a MA degree (while most Western armed forces consider a BA to be sufficient). This exigence of obtaining an MA is related to the implementation of the Bologna process (which normalized the BA/MA/PhD hierarchy in the EU). Historically, officer schools were

²⁷Marte Mangset, 'La Variation des Identités Élitaires des Hauts Fonctionnaires. Étude du rôle de l'Enseignement Supérieur en France, en Grande-Bretagne et en Norvège', *L'Année Sociologique* 66 (2016) 225–50.

²⁸Pierre Veltz, *Faut-Il Sauver les Grandes Écoles? De la Culture de la Sélection à la Culture de l'Innovation* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po 2007).

²⁹Christine Musselin, *La Grande Course des Universités* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po 2017).

³⁰Bernard Boëne, *Les Sciences Sociales, la Guerre et l'Armée. Objets, Approches, Perspectives* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne 2014), 190.

³¹Pierre Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d'État: Grandes Écoles et Esprit de Corps* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit 1989).

³²There are different pathways in the French PME system, but we are only presenting the most prestigious one in order to show that, despite being the elitist one, it is still significantly different from the elite civilian pathways.

considered '*grandes écoles*' for the armed forces. In order to maintain their status as members of the group of French elite schools, they could not deliver a diploma that would be considered inferior to those of civilian *grandes écoles*, and thus decided to commission junior officers with a MA instead of a BA.

After an initial time of service, officers (at the rank of captains/majors) are encouraged to take the competitive examination for the *Ecole de Guerre* (joint war college), which they attend for a year. Finally, the most promising colonels, after they have commanded a regiment (or an airbase for the air and space force, or a major ship in the navy), attend the *Centre des Hautes Études Militaires* (CHEM), also for a year. While attending the CHEM, officers simultaneously attend the IHEDN (which is not a full-time program), in which they interact with civilian counterparts. Olivier Zajec thus rightly notices that there are three overarching objectives in this PME system:

- Learning specific joint staff skills (planning and conduct of operations)
- Acquiring a good grasp of contemporary politics
- Knowing how to convince civilian authorities.³³

The second and third objectives are particularly noteworthy since, although some small-scale joint seminars with elite civilian schools exist, the training of the French military elite is *de facto* largely removed from the sociability and educational background of the administrative elite. Indeed, military officers have to overcome a basic lack of consideration from civilian leadership. General Bentégeat, who was the military advisor to President Jacques Chirac before becoming Chief of the Joint Staff, declared in an interview:

for the civilian advisors, there is this drastic difference between generals and non-generals. Only once one is a general, one is deemed worthy of being considered and recognized by these high-level *enarques* [graduates from ENA]. Until then, we don't matter much³⁴

Therefore, military elites need, at some point in their curriculum, to acquire a solid bureaucratic culture in order to defend their ministry's interests when they reach senior positions. Interestingly, acquiring this bureaucratic culture has been identified as a major gap in the training of French officers for quite some time, and successive reforms of the different PME levels have regularly attempted to foster such a knowledge of the States' apparatus.³⁵ This ambition of providing military elites with the required knowledge of bureaucratic politics is particularly present

³³Olivier Zajec, 'La Formation Contemporaine des Élités Militaires, un Enjeu de Politique Publique', *Stratégie* 116 (2017), 11–35.

³⁴General Henri Bentégeat, interview in *Le Collimateur*, 5 Jan. 2021.

³⁵Fabrice Hamelin, 'Le Combattant et le Technocrate. La Formation des Officiers à l'Aune du Modèle des Élités Civiles', *Revue Française de Science Politique* 53 (2003), 435–63.

in the CHEM's curriculum, which puts an important emphasis on the articulation between the political and military levels.³⁶ However, this effort must not contradict the basic military need to provide officers with required staff skills: balancing political and military skills is thus a challenge for the French PME system.

The second shaping factor in the French PME system is the operational culture prevalent in the French armed forces. Historically, France has developed strong expeditionary capabilities, which have shaped the culture within the armed forces and fuel 'a broader military imaginary around the idea of the use of military force as an effective tool of foreign policy'.³⁷ Indeed, 'military operations are a cornerstone of the French armed forces' identity. The military considers itself combat-proven and has integrated a professional ethos of delivering tactical results, regardless of the actual resources at its disposal'.³⁸ This culture of expeditionary warfare shapes the career trajectories and broader narratives and memories within the armed forces, with subsequent organizational consequences, for example favouring operational over analytical profiles when promoting officers, or overvaluing 'experience' (despite its many documented flaws as a source of knowledge³⁹) at the expense of critical thinking in the symbolic hierarchy of valued qualities. This leads to the assessment by a Brigadier-General that France's armed forces are 'designed for the J3, at the expense of everything else'.⁴⁰ In a NATO context, the J3 is the 'operations' directorate of a joint staff, and the comment is meant to emphasize the operational focus of the French armed forces, which can sometimes turn into anti-intellectualism. This operational focus also contradicts the military claim, exposed above, of broadly defining their area of expertise within the MoD. The military therefore tends to be caught within a contradiction of selecting and promoting its top officers based on operational experience, while simultaneously claiming legitimacy in areas such as intelligence and diplomacy for which the operational profiles are in competition with civilian experts.

Controlling the French PME system

These two broad shaping factors (the disconnect between military and civilian elite education tracks and the absence of research in both tracks, as well as the operational culture of the French armed forces) explain the specificities of the French PME system. A first characteristic is that unlike in

³⁶Benoît Durieux, 'Le Centre des Hautes Études Militaires: un Reflet de l'Autonomie Stratégique Française', *Stratégie* 116 (2017), 69–90.

³⁷Alice Pannier and Olivier Schmitt, 'To Fight Another Day: France Between the Fight against Terrorism and Future Warfare', *International Affairs* 95/4 (2019), 902.

³⁸Pannier and Schmitt, *French Defence Policy*, 127.

³⁹James G. March, *French The Ambiguities of Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2017).

⁴⁰Interview with a Brigadier-General, Paris, November 2020. In a joint staff, the 'J3' is the 'Operations' directorate.

the UK or in the US, there is no permanent civilian faculty at the *Ecole de Guerre* and at the CHEM. Although some recent proposals include an increase of the civilian faculty, it is only conceived as being a *teaching* faculty, and only in short-term positions. It is thus at odds with the majority of Western PME systems which, in line with civilian universities, emphasize continuity in teaching (through permanent faculties) and encourage research activities. The irony is that the *Ecole de Guerre* and the CHEM are both located in the *Ecole Militaire* campus,⁴¹ which they also share with the Strategic Research Institute Ecole Militaire (IRSEM), a research centre belonging to the DGRIS. The IRSEM is home to about 35 researchers, mostly civilians and all PhD holders. However, due to the tensions explained above between the DGRIS and the joint staff (which has authority over PME institutions), the IRSEM has an extremely limited and mostly ad hoc relation with the *Ecole de Guerre* and the CHEM. So, within 300 meters of each other, a research institution on war and strategy does not participate in PME, while PME institutions have neither a permanent faculty nor research activities. So far, the most ambitious attempts to improve cooperation have been limited to a light coordination effort. This situation also explains the style of teaching prevalent in French PME institutions. Instead of having semester-long seminar or courses divided in several classes led by the same instructor, French PME institutions rely on external guest lecturers, with a heavy emphasis on institutional authorities. Consistent with the focus on operational experience, PME institutions thus place a premium on testimonies and current activities over conceptual analysis and critical thinking anchored in the scientific literature.

Second, there is regular confusion between training and education. This confusion is by no means exclusive to France: when left in charge of PME activities, 'the military is more likely to focus on training instead of education'.⁴² In that regard, the French PME system could be classified as 'weak' according to Mukherjee's typology, meaning a system in which there is no provision for a permanent civilian faculty and a focus on operational training.⁴³ This is the result of the military's ambition to protect its 'core business' from civilian influences. For example, the word 'pedagogy' is used in French PME to cover both training activities, such as staff exercises, and educational activities such as conferences or research papers. This merging of training and education activities under the same label 'pedagogy' is not random: it allows the military to keep controlling curriculums (based on their legitimate expertise in training

⁴¹*Ecole Militaire* literally translates as 'Military School' (which was its function when it was built in the 16th century), which can create some confusion, but it is nowadays a site hosting several institutions, including the doctrine centers, some administrative units, and PME institutions.

⁴²Anit Mukherjee, 'Educating the Professional Military: Civil-Military Relations and Professional Military Education in India', *Armed Forces & Society* 44/3 (2018), 477.

⁴³*Ibid.*

activities), thus avoiding losing control of educational activities to civilians. A senior general with a commanding role in a PME institution once said to one of the authors: 'we are in the business of training warriors'. This sounds perfectly legitimate but says absolutely nothing about the qualities expected in a 21st-century 'warrior': the subtext here is that education activities (such as fostering critical thinking and academic knowledge) is not relevant for professional practice, which in turn justifies the absence of permanent civilian research and teaching staff in PME. This is no surprise when looked at from a sociological perspective: the sociology of profession has long identified 'general, systematic knowledge as a defining characteristic of the professions and the subject of professional training'.⁴⁴ Thus, controlling the entirety of PME is an identity issue for many in the French military, in a context where the French military elites are already disconnected from the administrative elites, there is a fear of losing control of the education of the future senior commanders to civilians. This explains why the former chief of the general staff (between 2018 and 2021), General Lecointre, regularly insisted on the 'military specificity': this is part of a broader concern in the armed forces of being diluted into broader civilian norms that would hinder operational effectiveness, and resonates with the concerns about the 'civilianisation' of the MoD discussed in the previous section. PME is thus a joint staff's prerogative, with almost no institutional leverage for the civilians to reform it. The impulse would have to come from the Minister's cabinet, but the civilian staff there overwhelmingly comes from the 'power schools' such as ENA and has thus no knowledge of research-based education and no incentive to create potential competitors for ranks and honours through better-trained officers. Yet, some younger officers lament the lack of high-level intellectual content in the current PME set-up. An interviewee declared to one of the authors: 'I have learnt nothing at the *Ecole de Guerre* that could be of use in my job as an officer. I should have been taught strategic studies, key concepts, military history etc. that would help me make sense of the strategic environment. Instead, it was one institutional presentation after another, with few stimulating conferences'.⁴⁵ Moreover, the more intellectually minded officers usually unfavourably compare the curriculum of the French PME institutions with the courses attended by their colleagues at the British Joint Services Command and Staff College or the US Air War College, Naval War College or Army War College, all institutions which admit French exchange officers. Yet, the shaping factors explaining the

⁴⁴George Ritzer, 'Professionalization, Bureaucratization and Rationalization: The Views of Max Weber', *Social Forces* 53/4 (1975), 631.

⁴⁵Interview with a French Lieutenant-Colonel a year after his attendance of the *Ecole de Guerre*. Paris, Jan. 2021.

structure of the French PME system, and its mistrust of civilians, are likely to endure for the foreseeable future.

An excellent example of these tensions occurred in early 2022. As mentioned, the issue of intellectual legitimacy is always itchy for military officers. Since they are not symbolically recognized as equivalents to the high-level civil servants who graduated from ENA, they still try to find modalities of intellectual legitimation, without reneging their focus on operational experience. For the PME system, acquiring some legitimacy meant obtaining an institutional recognition for the war college. Therefore, the directorate in charge of PME applied to the *Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles* (RNCP – National Registry of Professional Certifications), which lists and ranks officially recognized diploma according to the complexity of skills the certify for the graduate. The ranking goes from 1 to 8, depending on the complexity of skills. Until 2022, the only diplomas granting ‘level 8’ skills for the RNCP were PhDs: MAs and MBAs were ranked at the level 7. In March 2022, the War College diploma was the first non-PhD diploma to be accepted by the RNCP at the level 8. Key actors in the French PME system started to make bold claims that the war college degree was ‘equivalent to a PhD’, and that this certification would raise the international visibility of French officers. By making such claims, they were apparently oblivious to the basic fact that a skill certification is not a diploma (the war college graduates do not hold a PhD), and that a purely French skill-ranking system has no international visibility (unlike a PhD diploma). This example is particularly illustrative of the military’s conundrum to try acquiring some form of intellectual legitimacy to compete with civilians for recognition, but without putting in the actual intellectual effort (in this case, of acquiring a PhD) that may question the primacy of operational experience as an internal symbolic resource.

Conclusion

As this article has shown, France has established an unstable equilibrium between civilian and military actors within its MoD. The role of civilian actors has increased recently, creating a much more balanced system of responsibilities between civilian and military actors. Since 2013, the ‘new governance’ reform has transferred key functions from military to civilian actors (human resources, communication, international relations, strategy). The controversy created by this reform underlines the competition between civilian and military actors within the ministry. This case illustrates the role of the ministry of defence in ensuring civilian control and the competition between actors competing for institutional control.

We argue that the PME offers a relevant insight into this tension. It indirectly questions the specificity of the ‘military status’ what it implies and

with which responsibilities it should come. Behind this controversy lies an old question for military sociology regarding a potential banalisation of military activity. The willingness to increase civilian responsibilities within the ministry fed the fear of military personnel to see their ministry transform into a 'normal' ministry. They consider this evolution as a denial of their specificity. It led to compartmentalisation strategies to protect functions that they considered key for their missions and status.

Because it is the result of deep structural factors (the French political regime and educational systems), there is little reason to believe that the competition between civilians and military officers for legitimacy and power will disappear anytime soon. A short-term measure, destined to smooth the competition for institutional control within the MoD could nevertheless include a clarification of the responsibilities between the DGRIS and the joint staff. However, in the long term, the facilitation of civil-military relations within the MoD should come from a greater convergence in initial training. This could include a deep transformation of the junior officer schools: instead of a full curriculum, they could be limited to providing military training to officers already holding a civilian degree.⁴⁶ In turn, public servants should have more opportunities to serve alongside the armed forces in a multiplicity of functions.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Antoine Maire is an associate researcher with the Center for International Studies at Sciences Po.

Olivier Schmitt is a Professor war at the Center for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark.

ORCID

Antoine Maire  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6121-7153>

Olivier Schmitt  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1366-6621>

Bibliography

Boëne, Bernard, *Les Sciences Sociales, la Guerre et l'armée. Objets, Approches, Perspectives* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne 2014).

⁴⁶This possibility already exists for officers, but they are the minority and not the most prestigious track.

- Bourdieu, Pierre, *La Noblesse d'État: Grandes Écoles et Esprit de Corps* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit 1989).
- Bruneau, Thomas and Richard Goetze, 'Ministries of Defense and Democratic Control', in Thomas Bruneau and Scott Tollefson (eds.), *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations* (Austin: University of Texas Press 2006), 71–98.
- Carré, Claude, *Histoire du ministère de la Défense* (Paris: Lavauzelle 2001).
- Cohen, Samy, *La monarchie nucléaire: les coulisses de la politique étrangère sous la Ve République* (Paris: Hachette 1986).
- Cohen, Samy, *La défaite des généraux* (Paris: Seuil 1994).
- Cohen, Eliot A., *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership* (New York: The Free Press 2002).
- Daho, Grégory, 'A Revenge of the Generals. The Rebalancing of the Civil-Military Relations in France', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 13/3 (2019), 304–22. doi:[10.1080/17502977.2019.1623753](https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2019.1623753).
- Durieux, Benoît, 'Le Centre des Hautes Études Militaires: un Reflet de l'Autonomie Stratégique Française', *Stratégique* 116/3 (2017), 69–90. doi:[10.3917/strat.116.0069](https://doi.org/10.3917/strat.116.0069).
- Feaver, Peter D., 'The Right to Be Right: Civil–Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision', *International Security* 35/4 (2011), 89–97. doi:[10.1162/ISEC_a_00033](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00033).
- Guibert, Nathalie, *Qui c'est le Chef?* (Paris: Robert Laffont 2018).
- Hamelin, Fabrice, 'Le Combattant et le Technocrate. La Formation des Officiers à l'Aune du Modèle des Élités Civiles', *Revue Française de Science Politique* 53/3 (2003), 435–63. doi:[10.3917/rfsp.533.0435](https://doi.org/10.3917/rfsp.533.0435).
- Irondele, Bastien, *La réforme des armées en France: Sociologie de la décision* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po 2011).
- Mangset, Marte, 'La Variation des Identités Élitaires des Hauts Fonctionnaires. Étude du rôle de l'Enseignement Supérieur en France, en Grande-Bretagne et en Norvège', *L'Année Sociologique* 66/1 (2016), 225–50. doi:[10.3917/anso.161.0225](https://doi.org/10.3917/anso.161.0225).
- March, James G., *The Ambiguities of Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell UP 2017).
- Messmer, Pierre, *Après tant de batailles . . . Mémoires* (Paris: Albin Michel 1992).
- Mukherjee, Anit, 'Educating the Professional Military: Civil-Military Relations and Professional Military Education in India', *Armed Forces & society* 44/3 (2018), 476–97. doi:[10.1177/0095327X17725863](https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X17725863).
- Musselin, Christine, *La Grande Course des Universités* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po 2017).
- Pannier, Alice and Olivier Schmitt, 'To Fight Another Day: France Between the Fight Against Terrorism and Future Warfare', *International Affairs* 95/4 (2019), 897–916. doi:[10.1093/ia/iiz050](https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz050).
- Pannier, Alice and Olivier Schmitt, *French Defence Policy Since the End of the Cold War* (Abingdon: Routledge 2021).
- Ritzer, George, 'Professionalization, Bureaucratization and Rationalization: The Views of Max Weber', *Social Forces* 53/4 (1975), 627–34. doi:[10.2307/2576478](https://doi.org/10.2307/2576478).
- Roussellier, Nicolas, *La Force de Gouverner. Le pouvoir exécutif en France XIXe – XXLe siècles* (Paris: Gallimard 2015).
- Schmitt, Olivier, *Allies That Count. Junior Partners in Coalition Warfare* (Washington, DC: Georgetown UP 2018).
- Tertrais, Bruno and Jean Guisnel, *Le Président et la bombe* (Paris: Odile Jacob 2016).
- Turpin, Frédéric, *Pierre Messmer. Le dernier gaulliste* (Paris: Perrin 2020).
- Veltz, Pierre, *Faut-Il Sauver les Grandes Écoles? De la Culture de la Sélection à la Culture de l'Innovation* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po 2007).

Vial, Philippe, '1932-1961. Unifier la défense', *Inflexions* 21/3 (2012), 11–27. doi:[10.3917/infle.021.0011](https://doi.org/10.3917/infle.021.0011).

Zajec, Olivier, 'La Formation Contemporaine des Élités Militaires, un Enjeu de Politique Publique', *Stratégie* 116/3 (2017), 11–35. doi:[10.3917/strat.116.0013](https://doi.org/10.3917/strat.116.0013).