

THE APPLICATION OF NPM GUIDELINES ON SUPPORT IN THE FRENCH
DEFENSE, A FAILURE OR A SUCCESS?

The end of the Second World War brought about a “Great Transformation” (Polanyi, 1944) and a “resocialization” of the economy. However, the 1970s and 1980s saw the dawn of neoliberalism, boosted by the coming into power of Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States of America. The crisis of the welfare State strengthened a liberal revival, where ideas, cognitive representations and governmental policies and practices changed. It marked a neoliberal turning point in Europe – to quote Bruno Jobert’s book (1994) – and in the USA.

The State, considered to have failed, was no longer able to resolve crises, particularly the economic ones that it faces. Political actors promoted the model of the private sector to resolve these issues, reorganizing the State on a business model. This entailed significant transformation for public administration, which evolved from the “traditional public administration” (TPA) to new public management (NPM) (Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg, 2014). TPA reflects a Weberian approach to bureaucracy with a powerful administration linked to politics, a strong State, faith in state actors and in their efficiency. Citizens are mainly viewed as electors, called upon to reinforce the influence of the State actors. The key characteristics of the public administration (PA) are the dominance of the rule of law, directives and a central role given to the administration in the shaping of and the implementation of policies (Osborne, 2006). On the contrary, NPM is based on the efficiency and effectiveness of the market and economic rationality, preferring privatization to influential governmental agencies. Public managers have “to steer, not row” (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), meaning a definition of goals (what has to be done) and the way in which they have to be carried out with tools such as the market, regulation, taxes, *etc.* NPM claims that managerial techniques from the private sector are certain ways to improve the efficiency of public services (Thatcher, 1995). Consequently, the vision of most actors of the evolution of public administration is chronological, NPM replacing TPA, the administration and the State in a linear evolution of change. The market and competition take priority in order to satisfy the citizen-clients. For Suleiman (2003), the accession of NPM sounds the death knell for the “democratic State”, leading to a “reinvention of the government” (p.62).

The main goal of NPM is to decrease the public workforce and reduce the budget (Bezes, 2012), one of its tools being outsourcing. Outsourcing is defined here as giving the action of a service, initially provided by the public sector, to a private company. Unlike privatization, both the control and the regulation are still handled by the State. On the contrary to subcontracting, outsourcing involves a long term contract and is for a specific domain.

After the Second World War, France had a sovereign political agenda, with the nationalization of many of its companies and the State playing a key role under General de Gaulle. But since the government of François Mitterrand and the Socialist Party that came to power in the 1980s, there has been more liberal politics. It’s under the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007 that a wave of liberal reforms swept through all of the Ministries, embodied by the General Review (or reform) of Public Policies (RGPP). Without any inhibitions, Nicolas Sarkozy wanted to break from his predecessors and “rationalize” the public service. This politic was applied for every public domain, even those historically viewed as sovereign, such as the Defense field.

Since the 1990s and the end of the Cold War, the area of Defense has increasingly been a theatre for deep transformation. In 1996, conscription ended, making space for the Army as a career option¹. With the suspension of the military service, Jacques Chirac, the

¹ Irondelle, 2011.

President at the time, started the process for a new model of the Army, based on joint military forces (air forces, naval forces and land forces), and the “submission” of generals to the political power (Cohen, 1994). The armies change and become “contemporary” (Joana, 2012). Defense budgets and spending decrease drastically. Where spending was high in the 1980s and 1990s, it had a 1.8% reduction each year from 1990 to 2001 (Bellais, Oudot and Foucault, 2014). It is the end of the “inflationist compromise” (Irondelle, 2011, p.63). The State wanted to maximize on the “peace dividends”. However, the terrorist attack of September 2001 in New York is a game-changer. Conflicts had never disappeared, but they went out of focus compared with an ever-moving and ever-evolving threat. Military spending slowly increased again until finally reaching more or less the same level in 2013 that it did in 1981 (Bellais, Oudot and Foucault, 2014). However, the reorganization of the Army didn’t stop, and the economic crisis of 2008 reinforced the political will to cut back on spending. This explains why the motto of recent years has been “to do better with less”.

However, while outsourcing has been vastly used since the 1990s in Anglo-Saxon countries in order to reduce costs, France seems to be reticent to use it in the Defense sector. In the USA, the most famous example of outsourcing in the Defense field is that of “mercenaries”, contractors for the battlefield. Different scandals in Afghanistan and in Iraq have shed light on the phenomenon. In France, however, the State adopted a strict position, forbidding mercenary activities through a law in 2003. Ten years later than their Anglo-Saxon neighbors, in the 2000s, France’s Ministry of Defense started to show more open-mindedness to neoliberal politics. Jean-François Copé, Minister of the Budget from 2005 to 2007 and in charge of State Reform, initiated a first wave of reforms with the creation of the Directorate General for State Modernization that, thanks to audit campaigns, had the mission to coordinate, help and encourage more effective management and use of public funds on an interdepartmental level of the administrations. At the same time, Alexandre Jevakhoff, the Economic, Financial and Administrative Affairs Advisor to Michelle Alliot-Marie, the Minister of Defense, pushed in the sense of outsourcing. He used his influence to propose several outsourcing projects, one of them being for the vehicle fleet of the Ministry of Defense, a project completed in 2007. This first broad example of outsourcing led the way in showing the possibility of more being used in the future.

The first text that defines outsourcing in the field of Defense is the directive from its Ministry on August 3, 2000². It describes it as “a form of contractual management which entrusts the administration of some activities or functions previously performed in-house to external partners”. This definition was retained for an internal “Outsourcing Guide” (2nd edition, September 2003), edited by the General Secretary for Administration, which said: “Outsourcing can be defined as a form of management consisting of the administration entrusting to a specialized external operator or operators a function, an activity or a service previously provided in-house, by making the operator responsible for the objectives of quality of service or cost”. Four prerequisites for launching an outsourcing project are stated: “to not affect the ability of armies to carry out their operational missions; to guarantee long-term and significant economic and budgetary gains, assessed with a rigorous and pre-defined evaluation method; to safeguard the interests of staff; to verify the existence of a market offer for the needs to a sufficiently competitive level”. The General Secretariat of Administration (SGA) then characterizes the concept of outsourcing as a "contractual operation involving a more or less close partnership, whereby a Defense agency decides to entrust or transfer, with the obligation of an outcome, to a structure external to the department, a function, a service or an activity that it previously provided"³. The most recent definition we have found is laid

² Ministerial directive n°30 892 of August 3, 2000 and ministerial directive n°7496 of May 26, 2003.

³ Public report of the *Cour des Comptes* from 2011 on the cost and benefits expected from outsourcing in the Ministry of Defense.

down in Directive n°2596 of March 26, 2013 stipulating that “outsourcing involves entrusting, in whole or in part, to one or more operators outside the Ministry of Defense, and whatever is the method of contracting, a function, an activity or a service hitherto wholly or partly insured”. For Christian Olsson and Bastien Irondele (2011)⁴, three converging phenomena explain the outsourcing of Defense in Anglo-Saxon countries: “the decline of Keynesianism, the rise of monetarism and neo-liberalism as doctrines and practices of economic policy in the mid-1970s, the globalization of the economy which accelerated in the 1980s, and the end of the Cold War, by the defeat of the Soviet economic system, the conjunction of which "enshrines the revolution of privatization"”.

French and foreign scientific literature has mainly focused on the outsourcing of the force, generally on those that take place in external operations (OPEX). Schematically, authors who have worked on outsourcing in international relations question the evolution of war, jurists question the consequences for international law, political scientists analyze the evolution of the role of the State and economists take interest in the evolution of Defense budgets (including acquisitions)⁵.

That is why we wanted, in the framework of our thesis, to take interest in the question of outsourcing support in Defense on the national territory. Beyond a simple need to fill a literary vacuum, it seemed important to move the cursor of the research.

Why support? It is to better question the recent but very fashionable notion of the "core business" of the military. In an approach based on downsizing and cutting back on spending, the military is led, together with political actors, to define what is truly necessary for a soldier, implying that the "rest" could be entrusted to others. The core business, though unclear, is often the use of the force (at least in France) and so it would seem that support, from our study, for clothing and catering, can easily be outsourced to the private sector. Yet, it turns out that, for various reasons, this is not so clear-cut. The outsourcing of support proves to be more complicated to implement than it seems. As with the policies of outsourcing the use of force, the policies of outsourcing support question the transformation of armies, and ultimately that of the State. Moreover, as the literature is often focused on the soldiers, especially in sociology, it seemed important to us to look at civil servants, who are very much defended and often hit hard by cuts to the workforce. In a context of the "civilianization" of Defense, where the civilians of the Ministry take precedence over soldiers, the questioning of their outsourcing is also an interesting approach.

Why on the national territory? We assume that what happens "at home" is no less representative of the neo-liberal turn of Defense policies that happens abroad. One tends to forget that war, and in general outside actions, are not the only dimensions that define the Ministry of Defense. Escaping the "warlike" dimension of the Ministry, with all the implications in terms of law and security, makes it possible to better question the idea of an exceptionalism of Defense policies. Because the person we're feeding or dressing is a soldier, is there a different political approach than if it was for another public service employee?

We propose to study the attempts of outsourcing that were carried out for catering and clothing under Nicolas Sarkozy then François Hollande. This outsourcing was significant because it took place in the more global context of major reforms of the State with the RGPP and a total reorganization of the sector of support in Defense. The study of this outsourcing as the starting point, we also question the application of NPM guidelines in France in a domain deemed to be sovereign. Thus, like Anglo-Saxon countries, has France distinguished between

⁴ Irondele B. et Olsson C., 2011.

⁵ See on this subject (non-exhaustive): Avant D. (2005), Chapleau P. (2003), Chesterman S. and Lehnardt C. (2007), Cockayne J. (2007), Irondele B. and Olsson C. (2011), Kinsey C. (2006), Krahnemann E. (2010), Leander A. (2005), Olsson C. (2013), Petersohn U. (2011), Roche J.J. (2010), Singer P. (2008), Thomson J.A (1996), Tripodi P. and Wolfendale J. (2011).

"Defense supply" (a sovereign domain) and "Defense production" (which can be privatized), or has it considered Defense as an unassailable sovereign for the "collective good" (Bellais, Oudot and Foucault)? In other words, does the study of support in Defense confirm the analyses of Nicolas Sarkozy's RGPP, concluding it as "a lot of fuss about nothing"? Can we then speak of a "success" or "failure" of NPM in the field of Defense in France? Can we say, like the authors cited above, that the administration responds to a linear evolution over time, TPA being replaced by NPM?

To carry out our research, we rely on fieldwork carried out in Paris and in the provinces between May and December 2016 as part of our thesis. There were over 90 semi-directive interviews conducted with most of the actors involved in these decisions. This includes parliamentarians, Ministers and staff of Ministerial offices (Defense, Bercy), the military, the administration of Ministries and its various departments, *etc.* The interviews are anonymous. We also draw on existing literature, as well as gray literature (reports, *etc.*). This work is part of our thesis, at its mid-point, and this study is an opportunity for us to present initial reflections from our field.

We will firstly outline what these examples of outsourcing are, and the context of the profound reforms in which they take place. Then, in the second section, we will see how this outsourcing did not succeed. Finally, the third section will show how, despite this outsourcing being brought to an end, the compromise that was adopted by the government did not call into question the principles of NPM in effect in France.

I. OUTSOURCING UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE RGPP IN A CONTEXT OF REORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY ON NATIONAL TERRITORY

As mentioned above, the decision of the Ministry of Defense to outsource the clothing and catering sectors came in the context of a major general reform of public policies (RGPP) led by the new President of the Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy. Similarly, the Army's support was undergoing a major reorganization. The effort to outsource seems for policy makers to be in connection with these reforms.

A. A decision taken under the pressure of Nicolas Sarkozy and his RGPP

Nicolas Sarkozy, elected in 2007, based his actions on a rhetoric of rupture and hyper-presidentialization, the RGPP being a tool of affirmation for him, in regards to both the French people (to give the image of a President that acts) and facing his government (by strengthening his powers vis-à-vis the Prime Minister). Nicolas Sarkozy pursued a twofold strategy of activism and concentration, with an individualization of political life and a pro-active presidential position (De Maillard and Surel, 2012). The RGPP is presented as the spearhead of this new political era that Sarkozy wishes to embody and the administrative reforms will participate in the construction of the strategic and political identity of the executive (Bezes, 2012). The RGPP is based on a technical rhetoric under NPM, taking up an "Orthodox administrative theory" (March and Olsen 1995), where emphasis is placed on the use of the private sector. The RGPP is a neo-liberal conception of the role of the State, which could be summarized as "doing better with less" (Dreyfus, 2010), increasing the performance of public officials while decreasing the workforce with the aim of reducing the public deficit, to make economies of scale and to restructure the State apparatus. For Dreyfus, (2010, p.860) "[r]educing public spending is at the center of concerns, the organization of administrative structures, the volume of staff and the inflexibilities produced by its status, as well as the modalities of public finance management must be reformed. In short, the role assigned to the

State, refocused on its sovereign and strategic functions, will no longer consist in doing what the private sector supposedly does better and at a lower cost. As for the bureaucratic administration, it will be radically transformed through the systematic implementation of NPM guidelines". In 2010, the Prime Minister, François Fillon, declared that the "time for budgetary efforts" had come⁶. Government expenditures, particularly those related to the civil service, are one of the main targets, and the reduction of the workforce is a variable for adjusting public expenditure. The State withdraws its actions thanks to private operators on contract, on the recommendation of neoliberalist advocates and with a quasi-systematic use of private consultants to conduct audits.

Thus, each Ministry is under pressure, to meet drastic reduction targets and Defense is no exception. The Defense budget even serves as a cyclical adjustment variable for the budget deficit, leading to a financial crisis in the Ministry of Defense (Irondelle, 2011); one of the Ministries most affected in terms of staff reduction targets (Bezes, 2012). This is illustrated by the Third White Paper on Defense from 2008⁷ which sets out the objectives and the main guidelines. The commission which drafts it is chaired by Jean Claude Mallet, who was a key element in the reform of the armies in 1996⁸. It sets out in detail how the reform should apply to the Department. Indeed, the efforts requested are considerable, with a desire to show that Defense will not escape "the effort of the Nation". This is the idea found in the 2008 White Paper (p.289): "The effort to control government spending will therefore be much greater than in the past. It must be shared among all Ministries and all categories of expenditures, whether or not they are in operation, personal, intervention and investment". The mission of the RGPP for the Ministry of Defense, led by Prefect François Lépine and Controller General Dominique Conort, makes a series of proposals for downsizing and maximizing the capacities of the Ministry of Defense in order to better distribute efforts between the operational services and support. The RGPP, leading to the implementation of 37 functional projects, is expected to result in a decrease of 36,000 jobs. The White Paper, for its part, redefined the missions and set the means for the Defense apparatus, leading, through capacity adaptations and restructuring, to a reduction of 18,000 jobs. The cumulative effect therefore leads to 54,000 job cuts between 2008 and 2014, which is a particularly high annual rate of about 8,000. The figures of 46,500 for the armed forces and 7,500 for civilian personnel and military from Ministry agencies (General Directorate of Armaments, General Secretariat of Administration...) are requested. This significant deflation, by 17% in total compared to the initial situation, alone accounts for a quarter of the State's staff reductions. The White Paper outlined the framework for the reform of the Ministry of Defense, following a clear logic: reforming support to preserve operational capacities. Thus, on page 236, the White Paper states that "the first challenge for the armed forces is to succeed in the coming years in the restructuring of their support and administration, as well as the reduction of their format".

Nicolas Sarkozy, very present in the carrying out of the reforms, controls its smooth and swift application. This presence of the Elysée and pressure from the President to implement the reform pushes the Ministry to adopt measures quickly. In addition to Nicolas Sarkozy, Claude Guéant, as Chief of Staff of the French President from 2007 to 2011, is also an important reference at the Ministry for the RGPP so the goal of 54,000 fewer posts was reached quickly. Like someone at the heart of these reflections told us: "Sarko was very present, Sarko was present with Claude Guéant. He was involved, asked that we got back to him, he asked for notes". Likewise, a senior official in the SGA confirms: "You had a follow-up committee of the RGPP chaired by the Chief of Staff of the Elysée, Mr Guéant, and the

⁶ Speech of François Fillon, January 2010.

⁷ The first one was published in 1972 by Michel Debré et en the second one in 1994 under the government of Édouard Balladur.

⁸ Irondelle, 2011.

Prime Minister's Chief of Staff. We were routinely dealing with those authorities and we were asked about outsourcing, why you do not outsource here, *etc.*”

For one person in the SGA, “the idea of the RGPP in our country was to save money on everything to do with the forces, known as support to release resources to the operational side. The State had to save money”. Accordingly, the 2007 SGA Guide states that “the outsourcing projects currently under consideration are in the context of a major reform of the Ministry, which entails, in particular, the cancellation of 54,000 posts for rationalization and the implementation of an important plan for accompanying staff”. Outsourcing is perceived by some actors as a panacea for New Public Management, taking the example from Anglo-Saxon countries. For a senior official in the SGA, “there was a certain approach for those who were for outsourcing. I would say it was almost an ideological principle. Outsourcing is better, it is better to ask companies whose core business is to perform these services”. The Military Programming Law (LPM) 2009-2014 presents outsourcing as an unstoppable tool to respond to the reform of the State (p.24): “Areas such as clothing, catering or infrastructure are outsourced or outsourcing projects, the objective of which is to contribute to the achievement of cost reduction objectives while benefiting from quality services”.

In order to save money, while preserving operational capacity, support is therefore the first target for “degreasing”. At the same time, a major reorganization of the Ministry will be implemented, with the creation of the Bases of Defense (BdD) and the abolition of the various armed forces intendance for the benefit of the “Service des Commissariat des Armées” (Armies intendance service) (SCA).

B. Establishing a major reorganization of support on the national territory

Together with the RGPP, and following the reform of 1996, significant reorganizations took place within the support of the Defense, completely rethinking its architecture. Two major transformations, carried out jointly, can be distinguished. The first concerns the creation of the Defense Bases (BdD) and the second the establishment of the armies Intendance Service (SCA). These two reforms respond to a main logic, almost symbolizing a new “paradigm” or a new reference for armies: the joint model.

1. Creation of the Defense Bases

On French territory, up until 2008, each unit, department and agency of the Ministry of Defense had its own support service and decided on the resources to be allocated to it and their employment. However, with the new budgetary targets of the RGPP in 2007 and the new operational contracts of the armed forces from the 2008 White Paper, support appears to be a priority lever for savings. Thus, the 2008 White Paper (p.237) explicitly states that “restructuring will have to focus on support and administrative structures, which are often redundant, scattered, fragmented and inadequate to the commitments of the forces. Their operational capacities should be preserved and modernized”. Similarly, in a speech of June 17, 2008, the President of the Republic asked the Ministry to “review the organization of our support”, with the objective of “concentrating the implantation”. Similarly, the 2009-2014 Military Programming Act announces the budgetary framework for the reform, establishing the principle of “return” on the savings from the reorganization of the military map and the rationalization of support for the equipment of the forces and the conditions of the staff. One of the constraints to downsizing is the priority reduction to 75% of support and force administration jobs, with the remaining 25% affecting operational capabilities⁹. The report

⁹ Information report from the Commission of the National Defense and the Armies on September 11, 2013, p.53.

annexed to the law of programming repeated and detailed these announcements, stating that: “The map of implantation no longer corresponds to the threat and operational needs and being a source of additional costs, a new territorial mechanism will be put in place. Three objectives are pursued: to improve the operational character of the Defense tool, to rationalize a widely dispersed deployment and to optimize support. [...] The densification of the map will be organized around 90 metropolitan Defense bases. These Defense bases, which will eventually bring together 96% of the total staff and provide for the support and general administration of all units attached to them”.

On July 24, 2008, the Prime Minister and the Minister presented the measures of the reorganization. From then on, all capacities and means are grouped by geographical area and transferred to a joint support organization, which has its own operational budget. A project team was set up within the Ministry of Defense to harmonize support processes and align best practices using the best examples, domain by domain. Articulated by 15 working groups, it culminated in the summer of 2011 with the preparation of instructions specifying the organization of Defense support for each major field, and on recollections detailing all of the procedures for each area. Instructions were also published, basing support services on quantified targets. The deployment of BdD is envisaged gradually from 2011 to 2014, at the rate of 20 bases per year. However, the experiments carried out in the 11 experimental bases in 2009 and in the 18 pilot bases in 2010 led to an acceleration of this schedule and a modification of the initial scheme. It was decided to generalize the base model on January 1, 2011 and to tighten the territorial network to 60 bases.

The creation of Defense bases has two clearly stated objectives in their creation order: the base “must allow for coordination and find synergies for the support provided at the local level within a given geographical area. The Defense base is also the crucible for generating savings by, in particular, making it possible to harmonize and rationalize all support procedures at the Ministerial level”. The concentrative effect of the embankment is very clear: in total, the composition of the support groups was accompanied by a decrease of 15% of the personnel previously assigned to these missions.

2. The creation of the Service of the Armed Forces Commissariat

At the same time as the creation of the BdDs and in an effort to completely rethink support on an interdepartmental model, a redesign of the command echelons was carried out. Until then, each army had its own intendance that managed support on the regional and national level.

In April 2008, the Public Policy Modernization Council decided to dissolve the three Army intendance services, replaced since January 1, 2010 by the single service of the Armies Intendance Service (SCA). This restructuring aimed to achieve several objectives: an interdepartmental format concentrated on responsibility and know-how. It caused real upheaval, going from 11,000 people in 90 institutions to 4,000 in 30 institutions. The powers of the SCA were strengthened in 2014 through the "SCA 21" Plan, with the General Administration and Common Supports (AGSC) being placed under the authority of the central administration so that it acquired responsibility from “end to end”.

According to General Coffin, Director of the SCA from 2010 to 2016: “This reform was necessary because the different armies’ intendances, which still worked in a logic of based on conscription had to pass to a professional army logic - what we have done within four years. Our goal, in early 2010, was to have a joint model, which was not easy given the diversity of cultures between the armies [...] The SCA has made it possible to move from the traditional world of army intendances, very close to their staff and reactive, to the industrial world of the

SCA, with different processes and a different culture”¹⁰. There is a complete reorganization of the logic of support, with a logic of professions that deal with purchases, finance, law, accounting, internal control or logistics and a logic of vertical chains, which allows for identification of the main functions: catering, hotels, leisure, clothing, wages, training, human support and basic life management, which covers everything else (transport, babysitting, maintenance of premises, reprography, *etc.*).

Between 2009 and 2016, 10,000 positions were removed from the AGSC area and in 2013, as part of a comprehensive reform of the AGSC officers' corps and in a joint logic, the three Intendances of the armed forces merged to constitute the body of the Commissioners of the Armed Forces, a body which, between 2014 and 2016, integrated part of the officers of the technical and administrative corps of the armies, directorates and services.

At the level of the central management, the sub-directorate "Chain" leads the dialogue with the staff (preparation and follow-up of the execution of the service contracts) and gives the instructions for application to each expert center. Its mission is relayed by the "Exploitation" division, which is in charge of piloting the GSBdD (Joint Support Defense Base) and their overall evaluation with regard to the delivery of the units. The expert centers are responsible for the management of a given sector and ensure, in an "end-to-end" logic, the level of performance for all the organizations that contribute to the satisfaction of those supported in this sector. The Center of Expertise called CERHÉIA (Expertise Center for catering, hosting for Joint Forces), is responsible for providing guidelines and monitoring the performance of food production centers, life support services for GSBdD. The Center of Expertise named CESCOF (Expertise Center for combatants and Forces Support) manages clothing. While providing the services with the headquarters, this grouping by channels thus makes it possible to specialize and reduce the number of actors, reduce the size of group organizations and ultimately reduce costs.

A senior official at the SCA, Jean-Marc Coffin, Central Commissioner of the SCA from its creation until 2016 won the 5th edition of the "Public Manager of the Year" award in the "Transformation of the Organization" category on June 20, 2013. An award of this distinction reflects the full extent of the reforms, based on a very neoliberal rhetoric.

C. Outsourcing as a continuation of these far-reaching reforms

As an extension of the 1996 reform, the RGPP, the White Paper on Defense and the profound reorganizations that affect support, outsourcing is seen as a tool of choice to generate savings and quickly reduce staff.

In the 2008 White Paper it is stipulated on page 237, that “military personnel should concentrate on operational missions and civilian personnel on administrative and support tasks, if they are not subject to outsourcing”.

Similarly, in the Military Programming Act, report annexed, it is stated that “services such as clothing, catering or infrastructure will be subject to outsourcing, allowing for savings to be made by benefiting from the economic performance of external service providers. The quality of the services will be improved while the armed forces and the civilian personnel will devote themselves to their core business”. At first, it is determined that the Ministry of Defense has embarked on the path of outsourcing for support, and in particular for catering and clothing.

In many Ministries, catering has been the subject of successive outsourcing. For example, this was the case in the Ministry of Health (in hospitals) or in the Ministry of the Interior (in jails). Although it may seem trivial, catering is an essential function, vital even for

¹⁰ Hearing of Jean-Marc Coffin before the National Commission of the Defense and the Armed Forces of the National Assembly on November 5, 2014.

armies. No food, no army! However, in view of the outsourcing of this service to neighboring armies (England, USA) and other Ministries, and facing political pressure to downsize, the Ministry considered this support to be entrusted to private companies. The project to outsource the "RHL" (catering, hotel, leisure) catering function was therefore tested then implemented on January 11, 2011 with outsourcing in 11 restaurants on 8 bases¹¹, known as the "RHL-1" Project. This first trial involved 3% of sites and staff and only concerned production (the Ministry kept fluid charges and infrastructure charges). In the pre-assessment, savings were estimated to be at 18%. The second project, RHL-2, was planning to cover about 40 sites and the third, RHL-3, more than 100¹². More concretely, the first wave involved a total of 356 jobs (204 soldiers and 152 civilians)¹³ and it was eventually envisaged to outsource 8,000 jobs¹⁴. To carry out this outsourcing, an organization, the "Economat des Armées" (EdA), saw considerable advantages. It is organized in the form of an EPIC, a purchasing center and service provider dedicated to the support of the armed forces. It works under the Ministry of Defense and is in charge of the RHL operation. Although this trial was launched in January 2011, two months after Alain Juppé took office in the Ministry of Defense, the whole process of implementing this policy took place under Hervé Morin, the real leader of the project.

The situation regarding clothing is substantially similar to that of catering. Up to now, stock management, procurement and distribution in stores were carried out by civilians and military personnel. As these tasks were quickly considered as secondary, an outsourcing project was launched at the same time as for catering, with a contract estimated at 1.5 billion euros over 8 years. The reform aimed for the complete modernization of the "clothing" function. On the basis of the heterogeneity of rights and practices, modernization aimed at harmonizing management methods but also at rationalizing the logistical organization. In 2008, the clothing function was the subject of a rationalization project for the RGPP yards. In the end, it had to heed to a reduction of 1,213 jobs between 2009 and 2015. From the outset, this deflationary burden, which counted on 50% of the workforce, was foreseen with the outsourcing, the outlines and practical modalities of which had yet to be determined. From 2009 onwards, the EMA and the SCA focused, on one hand on structural reductions (-780 FTE at the end of 2012 / -1213 by the end of 2015), and on the other hand on conceiving a mode of operation based on a wide use of the private sector. Following a Ministerial decision of February 2011, the SCA then conducted a competitive dialogue with potential suppliers (outsourcing). In 2013, the dialogue is almost closed, and the Griffes Défense group of companies became the beneficiaries. This project involves the procurement, storage and distribution of non-strategic effects and involves the equivalent of 869 full-time jobs. High operational criticality effects are excluded. The study and design of the effects are also kept under control in all cases. Only the realization - the storage, transport and distribution of certain effects - would be outsourced.

These examples of outsourcing are therefore in response to the objectives of downsizing and major changes in the Armed Forces, particularly in the area of support. Thus, in the 2007 Guidebook written by the SGA, it is explained that "the first stage of outsourcing in 2002-2005 responded with a particular urgency, in the face of the profound transformation of the armies. As a result, it was conducted more in real-time than expected and was conceptualized by the Ministry of Defense during this period".

¹¹ Bordeaux, Pau, Houilles, Saintes, Saint-Maixent, Grenoble, Lyon and Valence.

¹² In some literature there is a distinction between RHL-1 and RHL-1bis, but it's the same thing.

¹³ Source:FNTE CGT summary from January 6, 2011.

¹⁴ Source: Report of the *Cour des Comptes* from 2011.

Despite the fact that outsourcing seems to be a tool in line with the dominant benchmarks of political actors, and that the majority of them are in favor of the approach, the RHL experiment ended when Hervé Morin left the Ministry and the clothing contract did not eventually come to light under the Le Drian Ministry. As senators have pointed out: “There has never been so little outsourcing than since it became a bitter debate!”¹⁵ As we will see in the second section, outsourcing is all but straightforward, and it has triggered strong opposition, notably from trade unions.

II. THE FAILURE OF OUTSOURCING IN DEFENSE, FRANCE FACED WITH ITS LIMITS?

Despite a promising launch, the will to outsource catering and clothing will eventually be abandoned, mainly because of the demands of the social actors. This evolution puts into question the idea of a French "exception": is the Defense of this country incompatible with NPM?

A. A Ministerial Change of Direction: Abandoning Outsourcing

It wouldn't be long before the Ministry was faced with opposition from social partners and the military against outsourcing. Three main arguments are put forward by the actors to justify the end of outsourcing: the human resources problem, difficulty in putting in place reliable indicators and fear of losing operational capacity.

The first point refers to the contradiction of outsourcing and the civilianization movement that came with the reform of 1996. Civilianization, with the aim of making savings, favors the use of civilian rather than military personnel, as it is deemed to be cheaper. In France, civilianization requires a significant increase in the number of civil servants in the Ministry of Defense¹⁶. Advocating outsourcing and civilianization at the same time seems contradictory. This is what we were told by a General: “to claim on one hand that we want to civilianize and that on the other we want to outsource some support functions because the support is better done and it costs less because it is done in the civilian sector are two totally contradictory orders”. Outsourcing for catering as a support service involves significant civilian personnel. However, unlike the military, these workers have trade unions, which see outsourcing as a major threat to the sustainability of jobs. Social dialogue rapidly deteriorates under Hervé Morin; Senators Dulait and Roger even accusing outsourcing of being a "social “red flag””¹⁷. According to a senior official of the SGA, “the unions would block actions and at the same time want to wreak havoc on the Ministry. It was a subject that had become very critical, so much so that it put going ahead with the reform into question. We saw clearly that there was trouble”. Faced with social unrest, trade unions became involved in the decision-making process. This process is described in five steps in the 2007 Guide. Reflection ahead of time (1), a pre-study (2), a preliminary assessment (3), the signing of the contract (4) and finally, the realization (5). Trade unions were consulted during phases 3 and 4. However, representatives of professional organizations felt that, even if they were informed, they were not really listened to¹⁸. Trade unions were a real issue for policy-makers, especially one year

¹⁵ Information report from **11 juillet 2012** « Bases de défense : une réforme à conforter » by MM. Gilbert ROGER and André DULAIT for the Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Forces Committee.

¹⁶ Joana J., 2012.

¹⁷ Information report from **11 juillet 2012** « Bases de défense : une réforme à conforter » by MM. Gilbert ROGER and André DULAIT for the Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Forces Committee.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

out from the 2012 presidential election. As one SCA official put it, “catering can be done either by civil servants or by private-law personnel. Of course, it remains discreet, we must manage our unions. Catering includes about 9000 people in this country, if you announce that you are outsourcing 20% or 30%, there is immediately a problem of reducing the personnel, which is problematic with the unions”. A system called “mise à la disposition” (MALD) was set up, defined by the law of August 3, 2009 and Decree n° 2010-1109 of September 21, 2010. Civilian and military personnel who wished to be available are placed at the disposal of the service provider. Officers continue to perform the same duties, in the same positions that they held in the course of their activity. In this way, officers retain their status and continue to be paid by the State in accordance with the rules that govern them. The service provider reimburses the Ministry of Defense for the amount agreed upon in the contract, calculated on the basis of what they would have paid in terms of salaries and charges for their own employees. MALD is based on three principles: voluntary service, the maintenance of the status of public official, the right of return¹⁹. However, trade unions are critical of this system; as UNSA (a trade union) representative writes in a meeting report “HR management of personnel in MALD will continue to be very unstable and their link with the Ministry non-existent”. A General Controller of the Armed Forces (CGA) made the same observation: “This tool has almost been a complete failure because very few soldiers have been interested and they have had to persist despite the process. Secondly, the tracking tool hasn’t been used for 2 years; nobody knows how to make it work”. Of the 171 people affected by RHL-1, 55 were made available to the service provider on a voluntary basis, which was considered to be insufficient. It is largely for this reason that Alain Juppé, then Minister of Defense, preferred to postpone the RHL-1 trial. The restaurants that had already been outsourced would continue activity as they were, but the rest would keep being internally run. For a general of the Major State of the Armies (EMA), “the Minister would not necessarily have the operational impact in mind but he would have been sensitive to the social impact of the decision taken. I think the more we show, the more we will be sensitive to the social impact of decision-making”.

As well as the social problem, another concern quickly becomes evident for the actors in charge of outsourcing. With tools for implementation, monitoring, evaluation and control that were inadequate or non-existent, they are faced with the difficulty of assessing the cost of military personnel or of a civilian from the Ministry to the State. This is the observation made by a CGA: “It is not followed up effectively, especially any changes to the workforce, it’s a shambles. There is no feedback on the experience, which would normally be developed by the CMDE²⁰. There is no feedback about the experience that is completed”. The Instruction n° 2595 and n° 2596 of March 26, 2013 define the different phases of the decision-making process and the social issues. A tool, EXTERH, is used by the HRD-MD (the HR services from the Defense administration) to track personnel involved in the outsourcing. However, tools for costing, comparisons, monitoring and control of the project remain uncertain. For a CGA, “the 2013 instruction that defines the monitoring device tool also defines a method of evaluation of the results, but it is incomplete, very incomplete. The method is rather rudimentary so we had to fiddle around. There are very few people who were familiar with the assessment methods on the DAF [economic service from the Defense administration] side. The tools, especially for evaluation, on the HR advantages do not exist. They were there but were very flawed for a year or two, and then they got forgotten about. Basically, there was no

¹⁹ Report from the *Cour des Comptes* in 2011 entitled “The expected cost and benefits of outsourcing in the Ministry of Defense”.

²⁰ The Departmental Coordination Committee for the Outsourcing Process (CMDE) is intended to accompany the outsourcing. This committee brings together the EMA, the DGA, the SGA, and is chaired by the SGA, which also provides the secretariat.

follow-up, that's what it means". The problem of not having effective tools from the beginning resulted in the lack of a general working framework on outsourcing. Despite successive waves of projects since the 2000s, there has not been a political framework on this subject. Outsourcing appears to be conducted on a piecemeal basis, sporadically, without any real long-term political logic. This echoes the reflection of a CGA: "We have refused to precisely define the contours of outsourcing, to launch a public policy of outsourcing. Rather, they have been approached like individual projects, without any real connection between them. When we look at the list of outsourcing operations over the last 15 years, it is a list of miscellaneous items, there is a little bit of everything. There really has not been a deliberate departmental policy on outsourcing".

Finally, the third major difficulty in setting up outsourcing lies in the fear expressed by some actors of a loss of power by the army, and therefore ultimately by the State. Appealing to the private sector for tasks previously attributed to the public sector questions the very conception of the State and the limits of its sovereignty. This becomes all the more problematic when it concerns a Ministry like that of the Defense. Some military personnel have been nervous about a loss of their internal skills and know-how. Their fear lies in the irreversibility of delegation to the private sector, which would entail the disappearance of certain trades and therefore certain in-house knowledge. Ultimately, it is the autonomy of the military that is at stake, and their independence from the private sector. The fear would be of a State and army subordinate to businesses and to the market, unable to function without them. For a CGA, "there is a fear of the dark insofar as outsourcing being a risk, according to the armies. The armies did not want to move too fast from a position where they were fully integrated and had a hand in the control of all functions to one where they would have to negotiate with external operators and more being kept from them". The underlying question is ultimately: "How and to what level to outsource?"²¹ As someone from the SCA put it, "the question facing us in catering is should we outsource? It truly is a political question. This has been a recurring issue in the department for about 15 years". The fear is hence the irreversibility which, if outsourcing goes ahead, would lead the army to no longer be able to retrieve its internal capacities if it needed to. In other words, outsourcing could lead to a loss of a military know-how and be replaced by private sector expertise, on which the armies would become dependent. Although this does not seem to be a problem in peacetime, the armed forces are afraid of altering their capacity for external operations. For an SCA staff member, "this is called the peace, crisis, war continuum; we must be able in peacetime to set up the organizations to be used in a territory of external intervention. You cannot afford to have a break in this area". To overcome these concerns, in line with what had been done for the end of the conscription, the armies were requested to establish a "base of militarism" that would follow an "operational contract". In other words, the State makes an operational contract with the services of the army in which it defines the main objectives. Following this contract, the armies set a base that details how many people are needed for it to accomplish its tasks. On top of the number of military personnel, in theory the rest can be outsourced. This solely managerial tool can be a way for the Minister to depoliticize the debate²². As one General put it, "my goal as a soldier is to maintain the base of military personnel that allows me to be ready to act at all times, in all places. Peace, crises, war. So we have a military base that is non-negotiable, which is defined by the Military Staff".

Thus, it will be asked of the Defense to determine to what extent the State can outsource without risking the power of its own army. The term "core business" became recurrent in speeches, and, although unclear, it often referred to the use of force in OPEX. This is why support is often seen as subordinate. According to a general of the EMA, "There

²¹ Interview with a very senior official of the SCA.

²² Joana, 2012.

is a desire to refocus the military on what is called its core business. Yes, the military is basically there for war; it is for participating in operations”.

However, despite this managerial logic of human resources, hesitation still remains within the armed forces. That is why, as a SCA person explains, Minister Alain Juppé preferred to freeze RHL-1: “Ministers have a lot more intuition than us, the technocrats of which I am a part of. Generally speaking I think that Alain Juppé was right; he was not convinced of this move. In other words, we were embarking on a huge operation with quite a technocratic approach, methodological elements that were probably questionable and considerable risk of reduction of manpower, trade unions, social problems, *etc.*, all for a benefit that was not clear”.

In the end, Jean-Yves Le Drian decided not to go ahead with the contract for clothing for similar reasons to those for catering. So, at the Ministerial Investment Committee (CMI) held on May 30, 2013 the Minister of Defense decided to keep the clothing of the armies as an internal function. This turnaround, virtually just before a contract was to be finalized, had a tsunami effect for certain actors that had been involved with the subject for such a long time. They received a clear anti-outsourcing message from the Minister. As someone from the SGA confirms, “clothing stopped everything, it caused a terrible cold snap for everyone. Clothing got rid of a lot of enthusiasm. There was no more excitement about outsourcing within the department anymore”. Also, for a senior person at the SCA, “the clothing function has gone through a lot of changes, including an attempt at outsourcing that did not work. It is probably the area where the Army’s cultures are strongest and where we have the most difficulty in putting in place a system that allows us to provide services that are both effective and profitable for the forces. This will be a problem until at least 2017”²³.

B. France, a shield against NPM?

Many authors have argued that NPM is not a uniform phenomenon across countries. What is successful in some may prove to be failures in others. In a comparative approach, some authors have highlighted the differences between countries, especially between very liberal, often Anglo-Saxon, and more sovereign countries such as France, Germany or Japan. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2000) distinguish between so-called "Rechtsstaat" (State of Law) countries where the State is a player for the structure of society, as in France, and "public interest" states, such as Anglo-Saxon countries that do not have the vision of a such a present State. For Suleiman (2003), France has a vision of the State as the "cement of fundamental values". Management is therefore assigned, it does not automatically exist. It is not a rigid and universal application, but a political program with a strong practical dimension (Suleiman, 2003). The degree to which NPM is applied is "public service trade-offs" (Hood, 1991). Also, it is not a neutral process, but a question of legitimation (March and Olsen, 1995). Unitary states like France are more concerned with maintaining their administration and being in charge of the provision of services.

Thus, France is often regarded as having "exceptionalism" in its application of capitalism. With an "interventionist" capitalism, as acclaimed by economic researchers, after the Second World War, France was gradually forgotten in the 1990s when studies advocated for a convergence of States around the neoliberal model. Thus, in the 2000s, researchers put the "liberal market economy" and the "coordinated market economy" in opposition. France, not belonging to either of these categories, was designated as a "mixed market economy" of little interest (Schmidt, 2016). Similarly, France was perceived as being unenthusiastic about neo-liberal reforms, often having the adjective of "Republicanism" attached, this term signifying a historical reconstruction and a re-reading of the past. It is a "label" used by elites and can be

²³ Hearing of Jean-Marc Coffin before the National Commission for Defense and Armed Forces of the National Assembly on November 5, 2014.

found in many political slogans (Mény, 2016). Republicanism is above all a question of beliefs and a set of political and legal doctrines shared by the political class, the leaders of public opinion and intellectuals. In other terms, an official ideology. It is for local elites a tool used for any purpose and "in all season" (Hood, 1991). This "republicanism" still remains to be a prevailing ideology today in France that slows down any measures deemed to be too neoliberal, as outsourcing can be, and has been used in Defense as an argument to (de)legitimize policies.

This idea fits into the assessment made by various authors of the RGPP. The reform is a mix between proving results, making compromises and making real change. For De Maillard and Surel (2012) there is a difference between the proclaimed political ambitions and any recognizable change. In the absence of a clear priority, some reforms were quickly snuffed out. Pressure from interest groups, institutional dynamics, inheritance and the weight of "routine" practices led to some failures. One of the characteristics of the political decision under Nicolas Sarkozy proves to be the compromise with social partners. It turns out that the presidency of Sarkozy, presented as a break with the previous policies, proved to include many reversals. The same conclusions are presented by Philippe Bezes (2012). Downsizing as the backbone of the RGPP led to conflicts, resulting in delays in the reforms and compromises.

Joana and Mérand (2013) show that changes in Defense policies over the last 30 years are not homogeneous across countries. This is why authors have expounded three typical ideals of "varieties of liberal militarism"²⁴. These three categories are constructed according to the two main vectors of change; a process of political-cultural liberalization (demilitarization, civilianization) and a process of economic liberalization (neoliberalism and NPM). They are a "Westphalian militarism" (traditional), a "functional militarism" (economic) and a "moral militarism" (political and cultural). Since the Ministry had to backtrack on outsourcing, would this mean that France would lean more towards a traditional and moral Westphalian militarism than an economic one?

Despite a strategy of "carpet bombing" (De Maillard and Surel, 2012), where many outsourcing projects have been studied, outsourcing does not end up taking place on a large scale, possibly reinforcing the thesis that in a field like that of Defense, a State can be too sovereign to implement reforms that are too neoliberal. However, we will see in the final section that the compromise found between various actors certainly comes down to the form of the reform rather than being based on its substance.

III. THE RRO, AN ADAPTATION OF THE STATE TO BETTER APPLY NPM?

In the face of disputes, a compromise is negotiated to satisfy all parties. Thus, rationalization will be finally adopted, also called RRO (rationalized optimized in-house service / "régie rationalisée optimisée") or RRO2. Following the presentation in the first section of what it consists of, we will question the resurgence of NPM guidelines within this new tool created for the occasion.

A. What is RRO?

As of November 2011, another trial started for catering, called RHL-RR: optimized rationalized in-house service (RRO). A definition can be found in Instruction 2596 from

²⁴ The relation between war and the armed forces maintained by the Western democracies.

March 26, 2013, characterizing it as "an in-depth optimization of the internal processes of realization" on the basis of departures for retirement and voluntary transfers. It therefore consists of applying certain in-depth changes in-house. Not resorting to sending people off for retirement, optimizing space, production and distribution (e.g. the supply chain principle); in other words, applying NPM precepts internally. The trial started over five sites²⁵, involving 298 officers (112 civilians and 186 soldiers), and in April 2012, a second trial was launched, "RRO2", covering 2 Defense bases and 5 catering sites, for a total of 970,000 meals²⁶. Instructions n° 2595 and n° 2596 of March 26, 2013 define (*a posteriori*) the Ministerial process for monitoring optimized rationalization of the operation, in-house or outsourced. These two parallel experiments focus on comparable perimeters in terms of workforce numbers, the number of sites and the number of meals served. They are therefore conceived as alternatives. When Alain Juppé decided to stop outsourcing after RHL-1, it is for the exclusive benefit of the rationalized optimized system (RRO) that is developed and it very quickly covers various bases of Defense.

For clothing, the same process occurs. In parallel to discussing competition, the SCA conducted a study for the rationalization of the function so it could remain internal. This work was carried out across all stakeholders and concerned parties: Defense personnel, trade unions, professional associations, SMEs in the sector and master tailors. All hypotheses of evolution were examined in order to demonstrate a comparative evaluation. At the end of the Ministerial Investment Committee held on May 30, 2013, the Minister of Defense, Jean-Yves Le Drian, decided to maintain the internal clothing function of the armed forces that, as we have seen above, favors RRO.

RRO was chosen because it represents a good compromise between the need to meet the objectives of the RGPP and the desire to avoid social conflicts. In this respect, RRO is a "hybrid" tool, at the frontier between economic rationality and a sovereign approach to human resources. It mobilizes a lean management method, which is very popular for companies to reduce costs and be more efficient. RRO is therefore a true public management tool in line with New Public Management. For a CGA, "RRO gives us between a 10% and 15% margin, the Lean method works very well. The decision of Alain Juppé proved to be relevant. RRO gives us room for maneuver and helps us downsize the workforce intelligently".

Despite the fact that the first results of the trial put forward by the MPPP²⁷ show that outsourcing is 10% more advantageous than RRO for catering, political actors preferred to keep the solution of in-house management rather than resorting to the private sector. The decision is not purely economic. The social factor, upcoming elections, Ministers in office for only a few months after Hervé Morin take priority over a purely financial advantage. All of these factors show that NPM is not neutral, but political. For someone in the EMA, RRO is the direct result of the negotiation with the union, "I was part of the Morin cabinet a few years ago, there were very large outsourcing projects for the catering function that were studied and it was FO [Force Ouvrière, a union trade] who, invented the concept of optimized rationalized management together with its experts. And it was FO who first sold the concept of streamlined management optimized to Morin, it was the end of Morin, then to Juppé. So the unions have come up a level, there was a context that made political subjects more and more sensitive". Similarly, in 2013, Jean-Yves Le Drian prioritized RRO over outsourcing in clothing, judging the profit margin too small to risk a social conflict. For one of the pilots of

²⁵ Coëtquidan, Écoles militaires de Bourges, Hyères, Rochefort and Châlon-sur-Saône.

²⁶ Recommendation from November 22, 2012 from the Senate on the budget- Defense preparation of the forces by Senators Gilbert ROGER and André DULAIT.

²⁷ The mission of the public private partnerships (MPPP), a mission of accompaniment created in March 2009 and attached to the SGA.

the clothing project within the SCA, “up until the last moment Le Drian had the choice to clearly say: I commit to INEO [the biggest company within the winner cluster] or I have decided to switch to RRO. It's a multi-criteria decision, that's it. And in fact, this multi-criteria analysis led to a decision that I find quite logical”. It is also interesting to note that it was the unions themselves that proposed RRO, and therefore NPM measures. There are, therefore, no problems with NPM in itself, but rather on the form that it takes.

B. RRO: change the container, not the content

The decision to abandon outsourcing projects obviously disappointed actors in the private sector. However, it meant a return to social calm while continuing towards the goal of rationalization. However, because of its principles of rationalization, and by its objectives of downsizing and budgetary savings, RRO does not actually deny NPM, and France does not distance itself from neoliberalist principles in the case of Defense. It is all a matter of rhetoric.

Thus, for successive French governments, neoliberalism was introduced, without necessarily admitting it (Schmidt, 2016). According to Bezes (2009), from 1984 to 1991, "3 successive governments in France invest in the register of managerial modernization that preserves the existing rules while introducing new instruments...like NPM" (p.303). Although the rhetoric of the political elite does not claim radical neoliberalism, it is in fact what is applied. For Schmidt (2016) and Hayward (2016), political actors liberalize more for ideological reasons than in a pragmatic response to international economic pressures. Thus, "grudging reformers...tinker" (Suleiman, 2003, p.208.) The French State adapted gradually towards neo-liberal values (Jobert, 1994), the debate around NPM taking place in 3 types of forums. There was the forum of economists, the most receptive to neoliberal ideas; the political forum, with a "battle of words", where neoliberal France opposes the Keynesian compromise; and lastly the community of public policy where various social actors meet and negotiate. The elites who set up NPM do not change; they adapt and are "repentant" (Jobert, 1994, p.16). For Jobert, France put "management neoliberalism" in place, more durable and less ideological, than the "doctrinal neoliberalism" of the Anglo-Saxon countries (p.18-19). The semantics here are important, because the key term for legitimating measures becomes "modernization", preferred to "reform", which is considered to be too divisive. Rather than using a neo-liberal discourse to legitimize these policies, leaders (from the left and the right) speak of "modernization" (Schmidt, 2016). The reforms in line with NPM take place in France without it being obvious, behind an official discourse favorable to the welfare State (Dreyfus, 2010).

Applied to Defense, this idea of an "underground" and rampant neo-liberalism is confirmed with the abandonment of outsourcing and implementation of RRO. Outsourcing can be seen as a means to push for rationalization and "rethinking" practices, even if RRO is chosen in the end. If the "threat" of outsourcing had not been branded by the catering industry, the very concept of RRO would not have come about. According to Jean-Marc Coffin, a senior official at SCA: "Its main contribution [of RRO] may have been the introduction of a systematic and thorough analysis of the costs and the organization of the functions in question, which is certainly a strong lever for modernization of the missions that are likely to remain internally governed". Similarly, in a note prepared by the SCA for the Senate in 2014 concerning RRO in clothing, it is stated that "drawing on the detailed modes of operation in the context of the competitive dialogue and on the accumulated experience of the SCA in the conduct of these activities, a study [on RRO] made it possible to determine the lines of effort that would enable the function to provide a service equivalent to that expected of private providers, while reducing costs and the logistical system". RRO therefore allows

for the same policies of downsizing, rationalization and budget savings while avoiding imminent social conflict.

For some, RRO can also be considered as a first step of rationalization before outsourcing. Setting up outsourcing in a Ministry unprepared in terms of tools is difficult. On the other hand, starting off with RRO, which allows the implementation of effective management and monitoring tools, prepares the department to host outsourcing. For some, outsourcing is inevitable. Thus, for a general, "the internal armies see their skills escaping them because they do not have the means to devote themselves to them. However, by using the private sector, you are competitive, and we can even assume that the private sector, outsourcing in some cases, will cost less than RRO. So I think that inevitably one goes to outsourcing, which I consider to be a big deal".

Furthermore, although outsourcing has been suspended in catering and clothing, they have not disappeared in the Ministry. Many types of contracts, called "innovative financing", are in full development. This is the case of public-private partnerships, a key example being Balard, the new site of the Ministry of Defense. Again, a question of semantics - not saying "outsourcing" does not mean the Department is not calling on the private sector. For a general, "there are kinds of outsourcing that we could call creeping, and that's subcontracting". Thus, as much as outsourcing in support such as catering and clothing does not seem to be news, it is also expanding in other areas of Defense. This is for example the case for the maintenance of equipment (MCO), or even intelligence.

A final point seems to counterbalance the idea that outsourcing is no longer feasible in the Ministry. The state of Defense infrastructure, which, on the national territory, are seen by several actors to be cause for concern because of their level of degradation. For some actors, it is probable that, as was the case in Balard, the PPP alternative, where a company takes over the entire site, including catering, will impose as an inevitable solution, despite the fear of social conflict. This is what a general of the EMA explains: "At some point, if you decide to keep it in-house you will have to put in the money when you have structures that are in a critical condition. So if you decide to go in-house, you have to know what you are tackling. Even if you don't agree politically, for me there is no hope for in-house. The reality of things is that pragmatism will lead you to outsourcing. But all this is done in a low-key way, in a kind of committee, because, of course, there is only one fear, it is that the local civilian staff hear about it and complain to their union. The information gets passed up and then that's it. But the logic is still to turn to outsourcing, there is no alternative".

CONCLUSION

This analysis of the relative failure of the outsourcing policies for catering and clothing leads us to draw several lessons and a number of avenues of reflection for the future. First of all, giving up the formal implementation of outsourcing does not mean that France is reluctant to adopt neoliberal policies and NPM. On the contrary, as we have shown in the first section, from the 1980s, and especially since Nicolas Sarkozy, it has developed far-reaching reforms aimed at "rationalizing" the Ministries, generating savings and reducing the workforce, basing its actions on the private sector model. In the Defense, this has resulted in an in-depth reorganization of support. However, in the face of these radical changes, the idea of experimenting with outsourcing has led the unions to raise their shields for battle against a foreseeable and significant reduction of jobs. This is why political actors have preferred to opt for an innovative rationalization tool, RRO. This makes it possible, in a less head-on manner, to achieve the same objectives over the long term. The State has adapted its tactics, but has not really retreated from the objective.

In the continuity of this observation, we would be mistaken to have too linear a vision of the administration that passes from TPA to NPM. Indeed, our analysis shows that the State has to deal with both trends, and that the implementation of NPM certainly takes place taking into account a recollection of TPA. In summary, we can say that outsourcing is not just a management tool for the Defense. On the contrary, it proves to be an important political issue, sometimes controversial. As one general put it, "Outsourcing is not an innocent act, it is a political act." The actors are caught between a desire to make savings according to the principles of neoliberalism on one hand and a persistent sovereign vision of the competencies of the State in Defense and strong social resistance on the other hand. The optimized streamlined management tool therefore represents an acceptable compromise to maintain balance within the department. Although the quest for rationality and neo-liberal management is paramount for the actors, it is not the sole prism of political decisions.

Lastly, in this article, we have not addressed the issue of outsourcing from the main angle of the actors and the decision-making process, in the line of public policy studies, due to space. However, it would be pertinent to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the actors and their cognitive frameworks in this decision to rebuff outsourcing for the benefit of RRO. This is one of the points we will try to develop in the work of our thesis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BEZES P., « Les politiques de réforme de l'Etat sous Sarkozy. Rhétorique de rupture, réformes de structures et désorganisations », in *Les politiques publiques sous Sarkozy*, DE MAILLARD J., SUREL Y. (dir), SciencePo Les Presses, 2012
- BOËNE B., DANDEKER C. (dir.), *Les armées en Europe*, Paris, La Découverte, 1998.
- BRYSON J.M., CROSBY B.C., BLOOMBERG L., « Public Value Governance : Moving beyond Traditional Public Administration and the New Public Management », *Public Administration Review*, 74(4), p.445-456, 2014
- CHAPLEAU C., « De Bob Denard aux sociétés militaires privées à la française », *Cultures & Conflits*, n°52, 2003
- CHESTERMAN S., LEHNARDT C., *From mercenaries to market? The rise and regulation of private military companies*, Oxford New York Auckland, Oxford University Press, 2007
- CHEVALLIER J., « Révision générale des politiques publiques et gestion des ressources humaines », *Revue française d'administration publique*, 4(136), p.907-918, 2010
- COCKAYNE J., « From mercenaries to market ? The rise and regulation of private military companies », in Chesterman S. et Lehnardt C. eds., *From mercenaries to market?: the rise and regulation of private military companies*, 2007
- CUSUMANO E., KINSEY C., « What is driving the Outsourcing of Diplomatic Security ? », in *The Routledge Research Companion to Security Outsourcing*, BERNDTSSON J., KINSEY C. (ed), Routledge, 2016
- DE MAILLARD J., SUREL Y., « Introduction. De la rupture à la présidence ordinaire », in *Les politiques publiques sous Sarkozy*, DE MAILLARD J., SUREL Y. (dir), SciencePo Les Presses, 2012
- DREYFUS F., « La révision générale des politiques publiques, une conception néolibérale du rôle de l'Etat ? », *Revue française d'administration publique*, 4(136), 2010
- HAYWARD J., « The State Imperative », in *The Oxford Handbook of French Politics*, ELGIE R., GROSSMAN E., MAZUR A.G. (ed), Oxford, 2016
- HIBOU B., *La privatisation des Etats*, Karthala, 1999
- HOOD C., « A Public Management for all Seasons? », *Public Administration*, 69(Spring), p. 3-19, 1991

- IRONDELLE B., « La réforme des armées en France, genèse d'une décision politique », in *Politiques de défense : institution, innovations, européanisations*, VENNESSON P. (dir), L'Harmattan, 2000
- IRONDELLE B., *La réforme des armées en France. Sociologie de la décision*, SciencesPo Press, 2011
- IRONDELLE B. et OLSSON C., « La privatisation de la guerre: le cas anglo-américain », in *La guerre irrégulière* Danet D., Malis C., Strachan H.(eds)., Economica, 2011
- JOANA J., « Les politiques de la ressource humaine des armées en France et en Grande-Bretagne : le sens des réformes », *Revue française de science politique* 2004/5 (Vol. 54), p. 811-827.
- JOANA J., *Les armées contemporaines*, SciencePo Les Presses, 2012
- JOANA J. et MERAND F., « Politique de défense et variétés du militarisme libéral », *Gouvernement et Action Publique*, vol.2, n°4, p. 549- 566, 2013
- JOBERT B. (dir.), *Le tournant néolibéral*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1994
- KINSEY C., *Corporate soldiers and international security: the rise of private military companies*, Routledge, 2006
- KRAHMANN E., *States, citizens and the privatization of security*, Cambridge University Press, 2010
- LEANDER A., « The power to construct international security : on the significance of private military companies », *Millenium Journal of international Studies*, vol. 33, n° 3, 2005
- MAGNON-PUJO Cyril, « La souveraineté est-elle privatisable ? La régulation des compagnies de sécurité privée comme renégociation des frontières de l'État », *Politix*, 2011/3 n° 95, p. 129-153.
- MARCH J. G., OLSEN J. P., *Democratic Governance*, The Free Press, 1995
- MÉNY Y., « Republicanism : A Transatlantic Misunderstanding », in *The Oxford Handbook of French Politics*, ELGIE R., GROSSMAN E., MAZUR A.G. (ed), Oxford, 2016
- MOSKOS C., « From Institution to Occupation : Trends in Military Organization », *Armed Forces and Society* , 4 (1), 1977
- MULLER P., *Airbus, l'ambition européenne. Logique d'Etat, logique de marché*, L'Harmattan, 1989
- MULLER P., *Les politiques publiques*, PUF, 1990
- MULLER P., « Les politiques publiques comme construction d'un rapport au monde », in RAMEL F ; HOLEINDRE J-V., *La fin des guerres majeures ?*, Economica, 2010
- POLANYI K., *La grande transformation*, Gallimard, 1944
- OLSSON C., « France: Making both ends meet? », in Leander A. ed., *Commercialising Security. Political consequences for European military operations*, Prio, 2013
- OSBORNE D., GAEBLER T., *Reinventing Government*, Addison-Wesley Publ. Co, 1992
- OSBORNE S.P., « Editorial. The New Public Governance? », *Public Management Review*, 8(3), p.377-387, 2006
- OSBORNE S.P., *The New Public Governance? Emerging Perspectives on the Theory and Practice of Public Governance*, Routledge, 2010
- PETERSOHN U., « Military Privatisation: Changing the Military-Civil Force Mix », *European Political Science*, vol.10, n°2, 2011
- POLLITT C., BOUCKAERT G., *Public Management Reform, a Comparative Analysis*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000
- ROCHE J.J., *Des gardes suisses à blackwater?: mercenaires et auxiliaires d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, IRSEM, 2010
- SCHMIDT V. A., « Varieties of Capitalism: A Distinctly French Model? », in *The Oxford Handbook of French Politics*, ELGIE R., GROSSMAN E., MAZUR A.G. (ed), Oxford, 2016

- SINGER P., *Corporate warriors: the rise of the privatized military industry*, Cornell University Press, 2008
- SULEIMAN E., *Le démantèlement de l'Etat démocratique*, Seuil, 2003
- THATCHER M., *Downing Street Years*, Harper Collins, 1995
- THOMSON J. E., *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe*, Princeton University Press, 1996.
- TRIPODI P. et WOLFENDALE J., *New wars and new soldiers : military ethics in the contemporary world*, Ashgate, 2011
- VENNESSON P., « La ressource humaine dans les armées : trois référentiels en quête d'une politique publique », in *Politiques de défense : institution, innovations, européanisations*, VENNESSON P. (dir), L'Harmattan, 2000