

THE 14 JULY PARADE, OR THE MILITARY CEREMONIAL AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

« *Illud autem optimum est, in quod invadi solere ab improbis et invidis audio cedant arma togae concedat laurea laudi* »[1]. This famous text by Cicero defines, once and for all, the relation that have to be set, in a democracy, between the political power - the senatorial toga - and the military force. The latter has to serve the former, so that they are able to continue their policy by other means, either to wage war, or simply “to show off muscles”. In the vein of military gesticulation, there is a choice between army manoeuvres and parade; moreover the second one offers the advantage to fit into the socio-politic ceremonial by affording additional pump: by their disposal of arms, by their mass, by the quality of their uniforms and by the richness and precision of their ceremonial, the armed forces are certainly an ideal instrument to stage the political power and state strength.

In France, the most striking moment of this performance is, of course, the 14 July parade in Paris, under the presidency of the president of the republic, chief of the armed forces, and in the presence of all the constitutional bodies of the republic, as well as foreign presidents or prime ministers invited for the circumstance. The 14 July is Bastille Day, since a law of the 6 July 1880, and it implies a military march-past since the 14 July of the same year. But this national day and its military part do not appear among the symbols of the French republic as they are listed by the article 2 of the 4 October 1958 constitution, but are considered at the same level, as well as the cock, the Marianne and the Republic seal.

This institution profits of a remarkable consensus. So when Mrs Eva Joly has said, during an electoral campaign, that “it is time to suppress military march-pasts on 14 July because that corresponds to another period [attacking] this warlike France”, she has found herself very isolated. Indeed, despite the tenants of this point of view, France is thought by French people as an old warlike nation, precisely, whose history is marked by a succession of victories and defeats. And it appears as evident enough that they do not wish a change.

So, it belongs to the armies to give a peculiar lustre to the Bastille Day, and it is precisely what the military ceremonial allows, majestic by nature and with an absolute precision. Until the reign of Louis XIV, it was defined by simple tradition, or even by circumstances. From that time forward, it has been defined rigorously by decree. To day the decree 2004-1101, dated 15 October 2004, “relating to military ceremonial”, is the heir of this tradition.

According to its article 1, the ceremonial is split in “parades” and “military honours”. It gives a foundation to the notes and particular orders of operation which precise the sequence of ceremonies.

One of these notes will be used as frame for the first part of the present study, with the objective to search the roots of the gestures with which military people pay respect to “the persons and symbols “which are entitled to them”. Indeed, these gestures have a history linked to the progressive building of modern armies and they are necessarily used during the sequences of any military ceremony, from the memorial ones to authorities’ funeral, to the colours ceremonies that scan the life of military units.

Even if a military ceremony may not go against the ceremonial, there exist several means to use the latter for delivering a tacit discourse: the place where it happens, the troops implied, the persons who are invited are signs that connoisseurs know how to interpret. Consequently, the second part will analyse the history of the 14 July parade in Paris, to try to show how it was used, within the frame of state’s policy, whether it is simply military, or dedicated to national concord or to foreign affairs.

But before that, it imports to understand that there is a military ceremonial only if a military organization exists, with its rules, concerning ceremonies of course, but also military people’s everyday life and, especially, operations managing.

If one wants to rebuild the genealogy of these instruments, it is good to use this text of Adam Smith:

“The first duty of the sovereign, that of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies, can be performed only by means of a military force.”[2]

But this military force can be build through different ways. The most immediate is the one Thucydides glorified, that is making of the citizen the last wall of the city. In case of threat, the peasant, the worker, the employee... take up arms and turn into soldiers:

“Full ten thousand heavy infantry were in the field, all Athenian citizens, (...) Then the resident aliens who joined in the incursion were at least three thousand strong”.

This option is named “militia system” by Smith. But a system employing civil people can find its limits when it is not only a question of taking up arms to defend “the homeland in danger”, but of maintaining watch “in any time, any circumstance and against any form of aggression”[3]. This permanence of defence action implies also a permanent presence under the colours, guarantee of absolute availability.

It is the reason why Smith is constantly praising the “standing army” system, by which the state,

“ by maintaining and employing a certain number of citizens (...) it may render the trade of a soldier a particular trade, separate and distinct from all others. (...) A militia, however, in whatever manner it may be either disciplined or exercised, must always be much inferior to a well-disciplined and well-exercised standing army” [4].

In France, this system has progressively substituted for the “ost” or military service owed by a vassal to his lord. The States General of 1439, convened by Charles VII, have approved the creation of a standing army and the institution of a perpetual royal tax. This system reached its maturity under Louis XIV, what is expressed by the adoption of the uniform as a membership marker of a military corps [5].

2. THE INSTRUMENTS OF MILITARY CEREMONIAL

A parade is a sequence of manoeuvres strictly provided by the ceremonial, either “*de pied ferme*”, that is to say on the spot, or in “*ordre serré*”, that is in close formation. As regards to make numerous troops manoeuvre it is necessary to give precise orders and it is capital they are heard.

It is the reason why each order can be doubled by a clarion or trumpet call, for the precision of their sound [6], or by a drum roll for adding to the solemnity or for giving a precise rhythm to the troop's step [7].

2.1 *Prise d'armes* (taking up of arms)

Note n°...		
DEROULEMENT DE LA CEREMONIE [PRISE D'ARMES]		
Phase 1 – Mise en place		
Horaire	Autorité ou manœuvre	Ordre
9h	Mise en place terminée aux ordres des commandants de promotions	

“The *prise d'armes* (rising-up in arms) constitutes undeniably for the medieval period a gesture eminently politic, meaning that it is considered by communities as un fundamental right - the one of self defence against foreign aggressions - constituent of their very existence (...)” [8]

So it is a transgression of the interdiction of having and, a fortiori, of carrying arms. The “free men”, that is the Franks, carried arms as a proof of their freedom and placed them in their tribe's service. The progressive constitution of the state has created a system where freedom has largely been abandoned, for an economic or military organization, based on the obligation, either in kind, at the beginning - fatigue or ost - or in cash later - taxes. Nevertheless the free man accepts only reluctantly to lose this eminent freedom to defend himself “*en prenant les armes*” (rising up in arms), when his security is no longer guaranteed by the armed forces and a fortiori when these forces are the cause of insecurity. If the *prise d'armes* is then understandable it remains illegal, so that the sovereign has to choose between repression and legitimation. In 1439, Charles VII had to edict a decree « *pour obvier aux pilleries et vexations des gens de guerre* » (for staving off pillages and humiliation of warriors), promising immunity to those who would have risen-up in arms and killed looters[9].

Of course the interdiction has no reason to apply to “men-at-arms”, and especially to this peculiar caste that is the old nobility, for whose carrying arms in all circumstances is a privilege almost without exception:

« Ouy sur ce le Procureur Général du Roy, a été arrêté que ledit suppliant Conseiller ceans, & Connestable de France, sera receu au *Serment de Pair* à cause dudit Duché de Montmorency, sans que lors dudit Serment luy soit besoin laisser son épée de Connestable. »

Nevertheless these ones also can sometimes commit a *prise d'armes*:

« L'Auteur [Louis de Gonzague, Duc de Nevers] y justifie Henri III de toutes les calomnies dont tous les Ligueurs tachoient de noircir sa réputation, & il y désabuse ceux qui s'étoient engagés à *prendre les armes* contre le Roi, sous prétexte de défendre la Religion »

If the *prise d'armes*, in this meaning has always existed, the word itself was coined only at the end of 17th century and would have taken the meaning of “parade” one century and a half later. The reason of that is simple: if the old nobility carried arms late enough, soldiers had no reason to carry a gun in all circumstances, especially because it was a cumbersome weapon, heavy and potentially dangerous. They had to take up arms in an armoury or on the rack of their barracks only in response to the call “to arms”, for an exercise or, precisely, for a ceremony: « Le régiment des Vaisseaux qui, par hasard, *prenait les armes* pour une revue, fut le premier en action et souffrit beaucoup. [10] » It is evidently still the case today.

1.2. *Garde à vous !* (Attention!)

Phase 2 – Inspection des troupes		
Horaire	Autorité ou manœuvre	Ordre
9h05	Commandant en second des troupes (CT2)	« Garde à vous ! »

The command “garde à vous” appears in 1683 in the *Exercice que le Roy a réglé pour toute son infanterie* [11]: « Prenez garde à vous, pour rompre le Bataillon ». Logically, it is found then in the following edicts *pour régler l'exercice de l'infanterie*. For instance in 1764 :

« Lorsqu'un bataillon étant en bataille sur trois rangs serrés, on voudra les faire ouvrir, on fera les commandemens suivans :

1 - *Prenez garde à vous* pour ouvrir les rangs en avant.

2 - Marche.

Le premier commandemens ne servira que d'avertissement » [12].

It is then understandable that « *prenez garde à vous* » is equivalent to « *Attention* ». Twelve years later a new edict makes the meaning of this expression to evolve:

« On accoutumera le Soldat à l'immobilité, il la prendra aussitôt qu'on lui fera le commandement : Garde=à vous. Il la conservera jusqu'à l'avertissement : Repos » [13].

But the text does not precise what position takes the one who is *immobile* (motionless). This is confirmed by the detailed analysis of the orders for the arms inspection:

« 1 Garde--à vous ; 2 Inspection--des armes (temps I ; mouvement I) »[13].

So it is clear that the order *garde à vous*, for which no time nor movement are provided, remains a simple call to attention with a requirement of stillness.

Having kept this meaning until now, this order appears as a first mean to pay respects; it is aimed at all the military people present, including those who do not carry arms for the ceremony.

2.3. *Présentez armes !* (Present arms!)

9h05	CT2	« Garde à vous ! » « Présentez armes ! »
	Arrivée du commandant des troupes (CT) et inspection	

This new command, more than the precedent one, is clearly today a mean to pay respects. A proof is find in the fact that when decorations are presented, only the recipients of *Légion d'honneur*, the first order of French Republic, are entitled to this position of troops.

It could be possible to imagine that, at the origin, the command “*présentez armes*” concerned the inspection of the weapon by a superior. In fact it is not the case, as it appears in the edicts already mentioned, because the only preparing commands are “*garde à vous*”; “*inspection des armes*”; possibly “*baïonnette au canon*”.

On the other hand, this famous command is present in the exercise regulations since 1683 at least. But the function of this command is unclear as in this example:

« Après quoi, si l'on veut poser les armes, on dira.

Demi tour à droit.

Présentez vos armes.

Marche.

Les Tambours battent le Drapeau, & l'on pose les armes aux faisceaux. » [12]

In the edict of 1776, which “*ne doit comprendre que ce qui doit se faire et s’exécuter à la guerre ; (...) retrancher tout ce qui est de parade* », one finds this order among the three one marking the end of a shooting sequence, after the setting of the cock “*en son repos*” (secured) and between two “*Portez vos armes*” (carry your arms):

« Second mouvement.

Achever de tourner l’arme avec la main droite pour l’apporter à-plomb vis-à-vis l’œil gauche au milieu du corps, la baguette en avant, le chien à hauteur du dernier bouton de la veste, la main droite empoignant l’arme au dessous & contre la fougarde ; l’empoigner en même temps brusquement avec la main gauche (...) »[14]

Nevertheless this position is already an instrument for paying respects, either to the flag or to a person « who is entitled to be saluted » :

« Lorsque la personne qu’on devra recevoir se sera approchée, & qu’elle se présentera pour parcourir le front du régiment, si elle doit être saluée, les Tambours battront, les Soldats présenteront leurs armes... »[14]

In France like elsewhere, the movements responding to « *présentez armes* » have changed with the evolution of the weapons characteristics : a contemporaneous assault rifle is not presented like a semi-automatic rifle of the 50s, and a fortiori like a musket of the 17th century.

2.4. *Revue des troupes* (troops review)

Phase 3 – Honneurs au drapeau		
Phase 4 – Arrivée des autorités et revue		
9h15	CT	« Garde à vous ! » « Présentez armes ! »
	Arrivée des autorités : Le CT va à leur rencontre et les salue à 6 pas, puis se place à droite, légèrement en arrière.	
	Arrivée des autorités : Le CT va à leur rencontre et les salue à 6 pas, puis se place à droite, légèrement en arrière.	
	Les hautes autorités militaires saluent le drapeau	Hymne national
	Le chef d’état-major et le commandant de l’école accompagnés par le CT passent les troupes en revue en commençant par la musique de l’air.	La musique joue la Marche des soldats de Robert Bruce.

The review of the troops has for origin the counting and inspection of the military people having to receive their pay. This function was effected by the “*commissaires aux montres et revues*”. They had to verify periodically the strength of the units under their control, that is men, horses and equipment. They drew up the unit’s muster roll so that the global pay of the unit could be confided to the commander on condition of distributing to the men according to their ranks.

To do that the *commissaires* convoked *montres* during which the troops where ranked fully equipped and *montrées* (shown). So it was possible to verify the identity of the present men, their ability and their equipment:

« Nous François Lucas, chevalier, seigneur de la Rochecesson, conseiller et chambellean, et Jehan de la Primaudaye, notère et secrète du roy notre sire, commissaires dessus nommés, certiffions aux gens des comptes dudit sire et autres à qui il appartiendra avoir vu et visité par forme de *monstre et revue* les 232 gens de guerre à pié dessus nommés et escripts par nom et prénom estant soubz la charge et conduite dudit Jehan Pigasse, escuier, leur cappitaine, sa personne en ce comprise : lesquels nous avons trouvés en bon et suffisant estat et habillement de guerre, cappables d’avoir et prendre chacun d’eulx la somme de 15 sous tournois à eulx ordonnés par ledit sire pour leurs gaiges et souldes de 15 jours entre commençant ledit 26ème jour de juillet. En tesmoing d’eulx nous avons signé ce présent rolle de nos noms, les jour et an dessusdits : (the exhaustive list follows). »[15]

But if he feared a falsification, the commissaire could want to see again the same troop [16]. It is the reason of the word “*revue*” (review), with the meaning that the same troop was going to be “passed in review”. And for that the *commissaire* may ask that the troop *défile* (march-past), to detect the lames, unfit for war. It is the reason why *revue* (review or parade) and *défilé* (parade or march-past) are synonymous.

2.5 Ouvrez le ban; fermez le ban (open with clarion call (?))

Phase 5 – Remise de décorations		
9h20		« Garde à vous ! »
	Les récipiendaires sortent des rangs et se placent face au CEMAA à 10 pas du drapeau.	« Récipiendaires, sortez des rangs »
		« Portez armes »
		« Ouvrez le ban »
	Le CEMAA procède à la remise...	« Fermez le ban »

These two commands very esoteric mark the particular ritual by which the principal military authority of the ceremony proclaims an order of the day (for instance anniversary of the creation of the Ecole de l’air), a solemn declaration (for instance reading of the Appeal of the 18 June of general de Gaulle) or, like here, the presentation of decorations. The ceremony of *ban* was practiced during the Early Middle Ages, by the Frankish tribes. During this, the tribe’s men decided about war. The word itself is known by the *Histoire des Francs* of Grégoire de Tours, under the low-Latin form “*bannus*” with the meaning of fine:

Ensuite le roi Chilpéric ordonna que les pauvres et les serviteurs de l’Église payassent l’amende pour n’avoir pas marché avec l’armée. Ce n’était pourtant pas la coutume qu’ils fussent soumis à aucune fonction publique.[17]

“For not having marched with the army” means they have not respected the ost, that is the mandatory armed service owed by the vassal to his lord. So the king’s army was made of the circle of his first vassals and, through them, of their own vassals, or *arrière-vassaux*. These two groups are respectively named *ban* and *arrière-ban*. This meaning has been used until the 19th century, for designating the men able to be called to the armed service, by order of growing age: 1st, 2nd, 3rd... bans. But it is with a meaning derived by extension, that this word is used today in the French armed services:

« Nous vous mandons, commandons et très expressément enjoignons, incontinent la présente reçue, que vous ayez à faire publier à son de trompe et cri public, par tous les lieux et endroits de votre ressort et juridiction accoutumés à faire cri et proclamation. Que tous Nobles, vassaux et autres sujets à notredit ban et arrière-ban (...) aient à se trouver en la principale ville de votre ressort au dernier jour du mois de Mai prochain, montés, armés et en tel équipage qu’il est porté par nos Ordonnances, pour marcher et nous faire le service requis, quand il leur sera par nous mandé et ordonné »[18]

So the *ban* could be the most ancient element of the French military ceremonial.

2.6. Mise en place pour le défilé (deployment for the march-past)

Phase 6 – Lecture de la citation de l’Ecole de l’air		
Phase 7 – lecture de l’ordre du jour		
Phase 8 – Défilé		
		« Garde à vous »
		« Mise en place pour le défilé »

All parades do not end by a march-past, but when it exists, it is most often the highlight of the ceremony. It is especially the case for the 14 July parade in Paris.

3. POLITICAL USE OF THE MILITARY CEREMONIAL

Curiously the 14 July has become Bastille Day during the spring of 1880 almost by default. There had been precedents: *Fête de la Fédération* in 1790 and 1792; military ceremonies of the *Directoire* between 1795 and 1799, but the 1st and 2nd Empires and the Restoration had deliberately forgotten them.

On the other hand, in 1879, the Third Republic, finally consolidated, needed symbols all the more because it wanted to be lay; only the republicans could want a national holiday on the 14 July; they needed a military celebration for marking the coming back into favour of the armed services and the sealing of their new link with the nation and their acceptance of the republic. After a difficult debate, as the issue was important and the possibilities numerous, the private bill of the deputy Benjamin Raspail is voted by the *Assemblée nationale* on the 8 June 1880 and by the *Sénat* on the 29, the law is promulgated on the 6 July. The same day a decree institutes the principle of a parade as one of the constitutive elements of the holiday.

In itself, the parade escapes policy, since determined once and for all by the military ceremonial. It is what could be called “the intangibles”. On the other hand, the political power keeps a hand upon some elements of great importance: the parade’s place, the choice of nature and number of the troops having to participate, including foreign troops; the identity of chiefs of state and prime ministers invited for the ceremony. It is evident that the decisions on these topics are political gestures.

3.1. The intangibles of a parade

Bastille day or not, the 14 July in Paris respects scrupulously the military ceremonial: deployment of the troops; inspection by the respective commanders; authorities’ arrival; salute to the colours; review of the troops; march-past in front of the authorities.

About the march-past, it is important to know its own genealogy. It is purely a manoeuvre “*en ordre serré*” (close order) for a troop of infantry or even of cavalry. During the second half of the 18th century, this question has been a subject of debates, sometimes violent, between the supporters of “*ordre profond*” (deep order) and those of “*ordre mince*” (thin order). The former was the mean to resist to the clash of the cavalry; the latter reduced the vulnerability to artillery battering. Anyway the battle order is permanently maintained and the whole troop manoeuvre together, according to a technique learnt for long and repeated incessantly:

« Les Sergens de Grenadiers et de piquet, qui fermeront la droite ou la gauche du régiment ou du bataillon, feront à droite & à gauche, quand les Officiers feront demi-tour à droite ; & marcheront de même quand on appellera, pour se placer à douze pas des flancs du régiment ou du bataillon ».[19]

This codification is one of the elements explaining the expression “*troupe réglée*” (standing army), since for these troops there exists manoeuvre regulations for cavalry as well as infantry.

The passing from *ordre serré* to *défilé* (march-past) is the result of a tactical necessity, that is make a troop pass through a *défilé* (gorge). The *Exercice* of 1683 is too brief to treat in detail of troops movements. It is different for the edict of 1750 which explains how a marching troop has to approach a gorge and fall into line again:

« Lorsque le régiment étant en marche, il aura à passer quelque défilé qui l'obligera *de rompre ses rangs, la droite du premier rang passera la première*, la gauche ensuite, & ainsi des autres rangs ; & le Commandant, de même que le Major, auront attention de faire reformer les rangs à la sortie du défilé, ralentissant la marche pour donner le temps à la queue de joindre. » (p.16)

The edict of 1776 is the only one to treat the march-past as an instrument of the ceremonial and it shows well that the tactical manoeuvre as helped to organize the honour march-past:

Lorsque le régiment devra défiler, il se *rompra à droite par division ou par peloton*, les Officiers gardant les mêmes places qu'ils occupent dans les colonnes. (...) On observera que les têtes soient tournées, & les files des ailes alignées sur le côté où sera la personne devant laquelle on devra défiler. » (p.364)

These intangibles being known, the march-past design permits a lot of variations acquiring, evidently, a political meaning.

3.2. Where to march-past?

This question can appear as unimportant, only linked to the practical aspects of a ceremony mobilizing a lot of people. That would be forgetting the Parisian geography is profoundly marked by history but also, instantaneously, by socio-economical determinants: in terms of political meaning, the *place de la République* is not the *place de la Concorde*, and the 7th district is not the 19th. In these conditions, the choice cannot, volens nolens, be cleared of any suspicion of political motives.

The *Fêtes de la Fédération* in 1790 and 1792 took place on the *Champ de Mars*, between the *Ecole militaire* and the river Seine. Of course the *Champ de Mars* was by definition a field of manoeuvre, but the decision was commanded essentially by practical reasons: how to gather several hundred thousand people not for a march-past, but for a civic cult (in the centre, Talleyrand will celebrate a mass with 300 priests)?

March-pasts of the Directoire have not, it seems, left any trace, so that one has to go to the 14 July 1880 for seeing the beginning of the tradition. One more time, the place was chosen for practical reasons. It was impossible to return to the *Champ de Mars* because all the facilities built in 1790 had been razed during the Second Empire. And the organizers needed a vast space able to accommodate numerous troops and as many spectators as possible, and they needed it quickly: “*We will find a mean to replace the Champ de Mars. A people always find a mean to express what they have in heart and mind!*” Consequently they chose the racecourse of Longchamp for the military part of the festivities of the *Troisième République* first Bastille Day. So, until the 14 July 1914, the Parisians, at least, will be able to say and sing:

« Gais et contents
Nous marchions triomphants
En allant à Longchamp
Le cœur à l'aise
Sans hésiter
Car nous allions fêter
Voir et complimenter
L'armée française. »[20]

The 14 July 1919, Victory Day, needed a more imposing production, at the level of the sacrifices consented. Nevertheless it was not evident that the victory ought to be celebrated this very day, since the different parties were not in agreement: socialists wished to associate the victory to the commemoration of Jean Jaurès' murder, on the 31 July, and catholics wanted that the Victory Day coincide with the Sacré Coeur church consecration, between the 16 and the 19 October. Eventually, Clémenceau's government chose the more significant date for the whole French nation, the 14 July.

It remained to choose a precise scene. For celebrating a victory and the most prestigious victors - three field marshals of France - why not the Roman tradition of triumph, with a march-past on a prestigious course passing under an arch of triumph? It is certainly why the course *Porte Maillot-Place de la République*, through the *Champs Elysées* and the *Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile*, was chosen. Anyway, the course through the *Champs Elysées* has become traditional until now, so that the political gestures in this field consist only in hour changes, adding of civil march-pasts or military displays and, exceptionally, in rerouting.

In this way, on the 14 July 1940, the “official” march-past was transferred to London, on Buckingham road, and under general de Gaulle’s presidency. Even if the Free French had technically no alternative, the simple fact that a French military march-past took place in the London’s streets, under the applause of Britannic people, took indisputably a strong political meaning.

The Second World War will cease early enough during the year 1945, for the Bastille Day to be of the same vintage. One more time the ceremony had to be grandiose for France to find again its pride scorned by the 1940 debacle. Consequently the same itinerary as the one of 1919 was used but with a considerable lengthening, at least for the mechanized troops: from the *Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile*, to the *Place de la Nation*, that is six times longer, with an official stand on the Place de la Bastille, a highly symbolic scene.

Finally, if new scenes were chosen, it was by Mr Giscard d’Estaing. Pretending to rejuvenate France in every domain and give to it a less starchy image, the youngest president of the 5th Republic has shifted the march-past four times in relation to the traditional axis: from the *Place de la Bastille* to the *Place de la République* in 1974; the reverse in 1979; *Cours de Vincennes* in 1975; and *Avenue de la Motte-Piquet* in 1977. These choices appear as signals to the “people” of Paris, nay to the “Left wing people”, since the triangle *République-Bastille-Nation* is the golden triangle of the republican idea in Paris. And if the avenue *de la Motte-Piquet* belongs to the “good” 7th district, it borders also the *Champs de Mars*, where the *Fête de la Fédération* took place in 1790 and 1792. Unless it appears as a provocation, the armed services marching upon the same roads as the demonstrators supposedly “left-wingers”.

3.3. What arrangements for the march-past?

The arrangements of the parade concern first the number of the troops on foot and the one of rolling or flying vehicles. Their number and their modernity are determinant elements of the “muscles show-off” mentioned above. And their presentation is a magnificent window of the French know-how supporting the arms export policy.

The arrangements of the 1880 parade imported much to the republican government, which wanted substitute a lay ceremonial for the religious one. But they had another reason to look after this ceremonial, since, celebrating the nation, they wanted also to get closer to an army of which the officers where predominantly royalists... and catholics. This particular ceremony carried the bringing closer of the nation and its army thanks to a symbolic gesture: the presentation to the army of the flags replacing those abandoned as a tribute to the Prussian army in 1870 and 1871. It was the role of the President of the Republic, Jules Grévy, to make this presentation since he “disposes of the armed forces” by the article 3 of the 1875 constitution. The particular stagecraft of the ceremony described by the famous painting by Edouard Detaille, was a consequence of that.

For both Victory parades, it was important to do “great”. In 1919 the theme was the respect to the dead and injured (one thousand crippled at the head of the columns) and to show off the strength of French armed forces, territorial or colonial - battle tanks included. In 1945 it mattered to show that all the equipment was not all American:

« Nous eûmes pourtant la joie d'admirer, en queue du défilé, un matériel neuf important de fabrication française, vivant témoignage du début de notre renaissance industrielle »[21].

The march-pasts of 1936 and 1981 were awaited since they implicated left-wing governments, after a long unbroken period of right-wing majorities. Those who predicted a pacifist tendency have been disappointed: in both cases the parade has been traditional. If the *Front populaire* had added a civil march-past in Paris, the Union de la gauche preferred a meeting of military and civil people on the Reuilly lawn[22].

In 1959, the first parade of the 5th Republic, presided by general de Gaulle like the one of 1945, has been the opportunity to affirm France's military strength: not less than 14 000 soldiers have marched on the Champs Elysées. They were 10 000 for the accession of Georges Pompidou. It was the times of “big battalions”. There was only 3 500 soldiers in 2015, simply because the conscripts had disappeared, the French armed services had been severely slimed down - public debt *oblige* - and they were engaged in overseas operations.

In 1974 there was only a march-past on foot, probably by solidarity with the people affected by the “oil clash”.

In 1959, the march-past showed a French army “between atomic bomb and bayonet”[23], meaning that their equipment was still largely inherited from the Second World War. General de Gaulle has done what was necessary and his successors have assumed the legacy: every now and then the successive presidents recall that France is a nuclear power: 12 Mirage IV and 6 tankers in 1965; a carrier truck for SSB missiles in 1971; armoured carrier vehicles for Pluton missiles in 1981; Mirage 2000 N in 2015...

2.4. March-past with whom and in front of whom?

The diplomacy has known how to use le 14 July tool for giving proofs of France's “good will” for allies and partners. Normally the invitations of foreign troops or of chiefs of states or chiefs of governments appear natural, commanded only by some anniversary or other. But it happens that the intelligentsia or the people are hostile to such an invitation: in this case policy has to find a compromise.

It would not have been conceivable in 1919, not to associate the Allies to the march-past: so foreign delegations were drawn up at the head of the troops in alphabetic order. In 1945 other allies had the place of honour: those of French “possessions”, which had accepted to combat at the side of the colonial power; on the official stand were seated, around the general de Gaulle, not only the Lord Mayor of London, but also the Bey of Tunis, installed by the Free French in 1943.

It is only in 1994 when foreign soldiers marched-past one more time on the Champs Elysées: they were German soldiers and it was 54 years after the defeat, but these ones belonged to the Eurocorps and celebrated the French-German reconciliation. In fact it is in 1999 that the first autonomous foreign detachment has been seen: Moroccan soldiers have marched-past in front of president Chirac and king Hassan II, to mark a cultural event: “*Le temps du Maroc*”. Brazil has had its “year” in 2005 and several Brazilian units have been inserted in the parade. In 2002 it was cadets of West Point academy. In 2004 British soldiers have come to celebrate the “*Entente cordiale*” centenary. And they have come back in 2007 with 26 other European delegations to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the treatise instituting the Common market. In 2014, 77 national flag parties participated to the celebration of the First World War centenary.

But the presence of foreign military people or chiefs of states is not always approved by the public opinion. The first invitation for Morocco in 1990 had to be cancelled because of numerous critics formulated against Hassan II by journalists or other opinion leaders [24]. In 2014 the presence of Vietnamese and Algerian troops among the Allies for the 70th anniversary of the Liberation provoked veterans' anger. The presence of Bachar el Assad in 2008 and of Enrique Peña Nieto in 2015 has raised a lot of questions in the press, in relation to breaches of public liberties in both countries. But diplomacy has its constraints and priorities, ignoring the sensitivity of a part of the public opinion or the media.

4. CONCLUSION

The 14 July parade in Paris is a military ceremony strictly regulated by a ceremonial having its roots very far in France's military history. It is different of other parades only by the number of soldiers mobilized, by their membership to all military corps, what is possible only under the presidency of the chief of the armies, the president of the republic himself. Seen by millions of people throughout the world, this parade is an ideal instrument to transmit political signals.

Of course it is possible to use the march-past to communicate with the people of Paris, knowing the part they take in the history of the whole country. For that it is enough to reroute at least a part of the celebration toward one district or another.

The principal signals are in the field of France's military policy. The march-past is not only an intangible ritual, with the cadets of military academies, the firemen of Paris and the Foreign legion's band. It is also a window showing the troops engaged in overseas operations, new armaments given to the armed services, as a support to arms exports. This military policy is one of the basis of foreign policy, helping to settle conflicts, especially when the use of force is needed.

But the parade can only be a mean to honour friends, allies and the different partners of the country, and it is all the more so that the march-past is more imposing and better regulated. It is the function of military ceremonial.

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