

# Restructuring the Belgian Royal Military Academy

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## **Abstract**

*The article first describes the past and present of the academic education at the Belgian Royal Military Academy, a university institution charged with the common basic education of career officers of all Services. It then explains the fundamental restructuring process that is now under way, i.e. the decision to follow the recommendations of the so-called Sorbonne-Bologna declarations and to implement a Bachelor/Master structure. This process can be seen as a logical consequence of two independent developments: the advent of postmodern military organizations and the gradual harmonization of higher (civilian) education systems in the European Union. The third and final section of the article analyzes the socio-demographic characteristics of the present students body and their motivations to enter the Academy and begin a military career.*

## **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to describe the fundamental restructuring process of the basic military and academic education of career officers that is now under way in Belgium. This process can be seen as a logical consequence of two independent developments: the advent of postmodern military organizations and the gradual harmonization of higher (civilian) education systems in the European Union.

On the one hand, effective performance of the task of the officer in the postmodern period with its new missions, most of them in a multinational framework (peace support operations), requires additional skills and capabilities. In this respect, Moskos and Burk (1994: 147) speak of the *soldier-scholar* or *soldier-statesman*. Officers are indeed more and more entrusted with extramilitary tasks of a political nature (relations with local authorities and the local population, with the media, with NGOs, with the other national contingents, etc.). In other words, they must have a more advanced, diverse and less purely military-technological academic training, in order to be able to face all these new contingencies (study of foreign languages, political sciences, sociology, foreign cultures, etc.). One of the aims of the present reform of the officer educational system in Belgium is to offer this more diverse curriculum.

On the other hand, at the European level, a slow, difficult, but nonetheless probably irreversible organizational integration of armed forces can be observed. The 1992 creation of the Eurocorps and the 1999 decision to set up an EU rapid reaction force of 50-60,000 men by 2003 are steps in this direction. In this context, there is a need for more

cultural interoperability, and therefore of increased multinational academic exchanges between institutions of military education. In order to make these exchanges possible, a certain harmonization of the various curricula seems necessary.

In fact, these developments parallel similar ones in the civilian sector. The advent of the European Single Market and the resulting need for increased labour mobility within the EU borders have indeed made the progressive Europeanization of higher education inevitable. In order to realize this goal, the so-called Sorbonne-Bologna declarations<sup>I</sup> proposed, among other things, that each signatory country adopt the Anglo-Saxon model of higher education, i.e. a Bachelor-Master (BaMa) structure, in order to facilitate the mobility of students within Europe (possibility to have part of one's education completed in another university) and the comparison of the degrees awarded by European institutions of higher learning. So, in order to facilitate (two-way) exchanges with civilian universities and other military academies, the Belgian Royal Military Academy decided, in 2001, to follow these recommendations and adopt the so-called BaMa structure.

But before explaining the content of the reform, an impression of the past and present of the academic education at the Royal Military Academy will first be given. In the third and final section of this chapter, the socio-demographic characteristics of the present students body and their motivations to enter the Academy and begin a military career will be described.

## Origins<sup>2</sup>

The Belgian Military Academy was founded in 1834, i.e. four years after Belgium's independence, by a French officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Chapelié, who had been given the task by King Leopold I to design the formation of officers. He was the first commander of the Academy. The fact that the Academy was founded by a French officer is not anecdotal. It meant that the preference was given to the French model of the 'Grandes Ecoles',<sup>3</sup> and more specifically of the 'Ecole Polytechnique' in Paris and it explains the dominance, to this day, of engineers - and the engineering curriculum - in the formation of officers. The first purpose of the Academy was to form officers of the Artillery and the Engineers, the technical arms of the day. Officers of other services only got practical training and usually came up through the ranks of NCOs. Only in 1849 did the general staff move to a yearly recruitment for other services and was a second type of formation created, for Infantry and Cavalry.

In 1914, the Belgian authorities disbanded the Military Academy, so that after World War I the Academy had to start again from scratch. In 1935, the Academy celebrated its centenary by introducing several innovations, including a new name: from then on, the Military Academy became the Royal Military Academy.

In 1935 lectures were for the first time given in both national languages (i.e. French and Dutch) to the 96<sup>th</sup> Artillery-Engineers and the 81<sup>st</sup> Infantry-Cavalry. Until that time indeed, all courses at the Academy had been only in French. This is not surprising given the fact that, until the 1930s, French was the only official language within the armed forces and officers were all French-speaking (which does not mean that they were no Flemish officers, only that they were not Dutch-speaking). It may be added that, in October 1834, by regulation, the use of Dutch had been prohibited in the armed forces. It was not until 1938 that a Bill concerning the use of languages in the military was passed through Parliament and implemented. This Act imposed bilingualism for all officers and reinforced the unilingualism of units. In their dealings with administrative authorities, the language of the region had to be used.<sup>4</sup> In 1939 the proportion of candidates for the Royal Military Academy who were French-speaking was 81%. Only in the 1950s did the proportion of Dutch-speaking candidates begin to reflect their proportion in the general population. (Werner, 1974: 19)

After the end of World War II and the reopening of the Academy in 1946, a commission was set up to design a new curriculum which would be better adapted to the new post-war environment (creation of new Services, i.e. Air Force and Navy, alongside the Army; a changing society and new technological developments). The result was to opt for an academic education at university level, complemented by a basic military training. This university education is what constitutes the equivalence of the officer statute with level 1 of the civil service.<sup>5</sup>

Two study tracks ('divisions') were created: the Polytechnics Division replaced the former Artillery-Engineering Section, with courses lasting five years, and the All Arms Division replaced the pre-war Infantry-Cavalry Section. From the beginning, the identity, and therefore the program of the Polytechnics Division, was very clear: forming engineers on the model of civilian universities. The degree was made equivalent to the legal degree in engineering. Academic courses taught at the Academy were therefore, for the most part, similar to those of civilian universities, with an obvious emphasis on military technologies. For the All Arms division, however, it was a completely different story. There was and, as will be seen later, there is still no such consensus. The Commission (made mostly of engineers) introduced a proposal to change the courses into a technical training adapted to the ever-increasing mechanization of the armed forces. Others were more in favour of a more military-oriented formation. Finally, as is often the case in Belgium, a compromise was reached: a three-year programme with exact and behavioural sciences. Only three intakes, however, would follow this curriculum.

During the Korean War, the Royal Military Academy was temporarily obliged to reduce the All Arms officer training to two years. Interestingly enough, no such cut was

made in the Polytechnics curriculum, once again clearly revealing the inferior status of the younger division. In 1955, the curriculum of the All Arms division was again expanded to three years, whereas in 1962, the Defense Minister decided to add another year, making it four years and equivalent to a 'licence' degree.

Finally, it must be mentioned that even though the Air Force and Navy became independent Services in 1946, they were too small to establish their own military academies. The Royal Military Academy was therefore given an interforce mission. Later on, even the officer cadets of the 'Gendarmerie'<sup>6</sup> and Medical Services were trained at the Academy.

### **Present<sup>7</sup>**

To quote its mission statement, 'the Royal Military Academy is a university institution, charged with the common basic education of career officers of all Services.'<sup>8</sup> Career officers constitute the largest category of officers in the Belgian armed forces: they represent just over 79 % of the total number of officers.<sup>9</sup> The other categories of officers are: complementary officers (limited to the rank of captain-commandant)(19 %), auxiliary officers (in the Air Force only)(1%), and short-term officers (two to three year contracts)(0,1 %).

The Royal Military Academy comprises two Faculties (formerly known as 'Divisions'): Polytechnics and Social and Military Sciences (formerly 'All Arms'). The education in the Polytechnics Faculty corresponds to that of civil engineer and lasts five years; the education in the Faculty of Social and Military Sciences corresponds to a university degree ('licence') and lasts four years. Education at the Academy is divided into two directorates: the academic directorate and the military directorate.

### *Academic Education*

As in civilian universities, the academic year is divided into two semesters, each ending with an exam session. The final year ends with a third semester (from September to the end of November) during which the student spends most of his time writing his final paper. Once they graduate and before joining their units, the young officers spend some time in an arms school or a training centre. There they get the specific professional training for the arm or service they belong to.

The curriculum of the first two years of the Polytechnics Faculty ('candidatures') consists of a common core. The next three years, however, vary slightly from the scheme adhered to at civilian universities, in the sense that a common core is also adopted in the third and fourth year (no specialization, therefore). To a great extent it consists of

applied science courses with a military content: chemistry of explosives, ballistics, aerodynamics, nuclear physics. Only in the fifth year does specialization really begin and students may choose from among four options: armament, construction, mechanics and telecommunications. Compared to engineers from civilian universities, military engineers are therefore more polyvalent. This can largely be explained by the smaller number of students in the Polytechnics Faculty (142 in June 2002) than in civilian universities.

If the academic curriculum in the Polytechnics Faculty is very similar to the one of Engineering Faculties at civilian universities, this is not the case with the other Faculty, the Faculty of Social and Military Sciences. The degree awarded by this Faculty indeed does not correspond to any degree at civilian universities (contrary to what its name would suggest, i.e. social sciences). The identity of this Faculty is therefore less clear than that of the Polytechnics Faculty. The proclaimed aim of the studies at the Social and Military Sciences Faculty is to form human resources and material managers. The courses taught during the first two years are common to all students while the program of the following two years (the 'licences') vary according to the Service (Army, Air Force and Navy) and the arm/service (Medical Service) to which the future officer belongs. This explains why the denomination of the degrees varies: 'licence' in social and military sciences, if they belong to the Army or the medical service, 'licence' in aeronautical and military sciences, if they belong to the Air Force, and 'licence' in maritime and military sciences, if they belong to the Navy.

Whereas the education of polytechnician students is mostly based on the exact and applied sciences, the training of students in Social and Military Sciences is, in a certain way, a mixture of 'soft' and 'hard' sciences, largely a result of the existing influence structure within the military elite<sup>10</sup> and at the Academy.<sup>11</sup>

During the first two years, the emphasis is laid on 'soft' sciences (called by the misnomer 'behavioural sciences' at the RMA), such as law, philosophy, sociology, psychology, history and economics. But subjects related to exact and applied sciences are also taught: mathematics, statistics, mechanics, nuclear physics. During the next two years, the curriculum comprises a common core including courses in military history, management as well as leadership. The 'optional' courses vary according to the Service or arm/service and are mostly technical. Students of the Army and Medical Service receive courses in construction, management, arms systems and telecommunications. Management, mechanics and telecommunications are the courses the future officers of the Air Force receive. For the Navy, the courses are either operations or management.

During the second year, in March, students must pass what is called the legal test of thorough knowledge of the second national language (Dutch or French). Their appointment to the rank of second lieutenant depends on their success in the test. The more

and more international nature of Belgian armed forces operations has led to a growing emphasis on the study of English: if the yearly number of periods during the first year is low (15 in Polytechnics and 30 in the Faculty Social and Military Sciences), it doubles during the second year and keeps the same volume during the next two.

### *Military training*

The mission of the Royal Military Academy is naturally not only to provide university graduates to the armed forces; above all, it wants 'to form officers who are capable of leadership in varied complex and exceptional circumstances in the service of the national and international community,'<sup>12</sup> and military training is one very important (and specific) aspect of this formation.

In the domain of the basic military training of the future career officers, the RMA has been charged with that part which is common to all the Services. After the RMA, this common formation is complemented by a more specialized one given in the Schools of the different arms and services.<sup>13</sup>

Even before beginning the academic studies in the first year, entering cadets have to go through a period of military initiation in which they are taught basic military notions and skills. After that, military training at the RMA is concentrated in two periods of military camp in every academic year: one period of two or three weeks around Easter, and a second period of four weeks in July. In the first two years, military training is oriented towards acquiring individual technical and functional skills and knowledge from the level of ordinary soldiering through to the level of the section commander. Towards the end of the second year, cadets have to prove their skills by obtaining the elementary qualification as a paratrooper in the commando training center in Marche-les-Dames. From the third year onwards, cadets are sent abroad to experience other training camps and other armies.<sup>14</sup> Most of the time is spent on leadership training as a platoon commander, the primary command level of the officer. Cadets also obtain the elementary qualifications as a parachutist in the paratrooper training centre in Schaffen.

Finally, academic education in the domain of leadership is mixed with practical training modules of command skills and techniques spread over the four academic years. In the end the training is complemented with conferences by leading figures from the military, industrial and political world.

## Vision 2010<sup>15</sup>

On November 10 2001, as part of the whole restructuring process initiated by his Strategic Modernization Plan 2000-2015,<sup>16</sup> the Defense Minister, André Flahaut, organized a workshop at the Academy dedicated to the future military education and training in the Belgian armed forces. Part of the session was devoted to the education of officers at the RMA. What resulted from this workshop was the decision by the Minister to fundamentally reform the entire officer educational system. The two guiding principles of this reform are 1) to anchor the academic education given at the Academy in the so-called Sorbonne-Bologna process, i.e. to adopt a Bachelor/Master structure beginning in the academic year 2003-2004, 2) to implement the *Strategic Vision RMA 2010*, and 3), to increase the gender, ethnic and educational backgrounds diversity of the student body. Two working groups were created within the Military Academy with the mission of implementing these guiding principles in the two Faculties. However, given the specificity of the Polytechnics Faculty (engineering sciences), it meant that, if the third objective was to be attained (increasing diversity by attracting also students with a lighter mathematical background),<sup>17</sup> most of the changes would have to be concentrated on the Social and Military Sciences Faculty.

From the academic year 2003-2004 onwards, the Polytechnics Faculty will offer one Bachelor of Sciences (BS) in three years with 60 ECTS (European Transfer Credit System) each, followed by one Master of Applied Sciences (MS) in five semesters. In the Master, students will have the choice between four options (Mechanics, Construction, Weapons Systems and Telecom).

For the Faculty of Social and Military Sciences, it has been decided to have one Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Social and Military Sciences (three years, or 180 ECTS), immediately followed by two separate Masters of Arts (MA) (three semesters, or 90 ECTS).

The Bachelor will consist of a common academic core (77% of the total ECTS) and optional courses (23%). The common core will comprise seven modules: 1) Language and Communications (27 ECTS), 2) Leadership, Ethics and Deontology (19 ECTS), 3) Political and Military Sciences (19 ECTS), 4) Behavioral Sciences (19 ECTS), 5) Economics and Management (19 ECTS), 6) Contemporary Military Technologies (19 ECTS) and 7) Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Sciences (16 ECTS). Among the optional courses, there will be a training course ('stage')(3 ECTS) and an interdisciplinary project (3 ECTS).

Students of the Faculty of the Social and Military Sciences will have to choose between<sup>18</sup> a Master in Management and Weapons Systems and a Master in Defense and Political Sciences. The first Master is rather 'hard'-oriented and technical (with a solid background in mathematics), while the second is more 'soft'-oriented (social sciences in the broad sense of the word). The aim is that by diversifying the academic

training (two Masters instead of one 'licence' now), the Belgian armed forces will get a more diverse officer corps, with more diverse skills that will therefore be better adapted to the new complexity of our times.

Given the fact that at present (see below), the bulk of the students of the Faculty of Social and Military Sciences comes from 'maths-heavy' options in high school (six hours or more a week), an increase in the diversity of the recruitment (as the Minister wishes) will have to come mainly from the 'soft' Master.<sup>19</sup> A possible stumbling block, though, is the fact that there is only one BA, which means that all candidates to the Social and Military Sciences Faculty will have to pass the same entrance exam (which includes a maths section) and receive the same mathematical and technical core courses in the first three years. This could cancel out the positive impact of two Masters (and, more particularly, a non-quantitative one) to the extent that it could deter people who are 'maths-averse' from coming to the Academy in the first place. It would therefore condemn the Academy to keep tapping the same – comparatively small and highly sought after - recruitment pool of young people with a strong mathematical background. A better solution would have been – as it had been originally foreseen – to develop two BAs (one 'quantitative' and the other in the Humanities, leading each to two MAs). After all, the mathematics and technology modules in the BA are mainly necessary for those opting later for the 'hard' MA. Two BAs would have had the benefit of being more transparent to future prospects and of truly opening the recruitment to the Academy to segments up to now largely untapped, i.e. young high school graduates who, because of the necessary mathematical background, were not attracted to such studies until now and were choosing instead to study law, sociology, psychology, political sciences, history, etc. in civilian universities.

Vision 2010, however, is not limited to a reform of the academic curriculum of the Academy; it also envisages a fundamental change in the overall way cadets at the Academy are educated and socialized. So, in the future, the emphasis will be placed not only on a more interdisciplinary approach at the academic level (for example, by introducing problem-based learning, multi-disciplinary research projects, and training courses in military units or civilian organizations) and a more diverse and interactive array of learning methods, but also on more integration between the academic and military parts of the training. In order to improve leadership training, and in particular to develop their sense of initiative and responsibility, the involvement of students in all aspects of life at the Academy will also be expanded. In view of the Europeanization of higher education and of defense, part of the training of future cadets will take place outside the Academy, either in other European military Academies or in Belgian or European universities (hence, the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System in the academic curriculum).

Finally, in the logic of the Strategic Reform Plan 2000-2015 (more flexibility, more joint, and more interservice cooperation), the choice of Service will be postponed until the end of the second year for most students. At present, when they enter the Academy, cadets must choose the Service in which they will serve for the rest of their professional life (Army, Air Force, Navy or Medical Service); as of 2003, all students, except candidates pilots and aspirant Navy officers, will have to make their choice during the second year. The idea is that they will be better informed about the nature of the various Services and the career paths available. Those who want to become pilots (in all branches of Services) will undergo extensive testing and training during the first year; those who succeed go on with their training as pilots; the others will be returned to the main group of cadets. The same logic will apply to officers wanting to serve in the Navy.

### **Sociography of the students of the Academy**

This last section presents some background information on the present-day student population of the Royal Military Academy: its social composition, the motivations to enter the Academy and the career intentions. The data come from various surveys carried out by the Chair of Sociology of the Royal Military Academy among students of, and candidates to the Academy.

#### *Who they are*

The great majority of the students of the Military Academy are enrolled in the Faculty of Social and Military Sciences (72% in 2002 against 28% in the Polytechnics Faculty).<sup>20</sup> 96% of the cadets were Belgian, the other 4% from a foreign country. (Luxembourg, Tunisia, Benin, Congo, Gabon)<sup>21</sup> All foreign students were enrolled in the French-speaking classes. Among the Belgian cadets, 53% were Dutch-speaking and 47 % French-speaking, i.e. a slight departure of the 60/40 proportion in Belgium. 61 % of the cadets were from the Army, 31 % from the Air Force, 7% from the Navy and 1 % from the Medical Service.

16% of the students were female, compared to 77% of the total officer corps.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to note that the proportion of female cadets has been steadily increasing the last years, following in fact a trend observable in higher education. For example, in 1988, there were only 3% female cadets at the Academy.<sup>23</sup> Most of the female students are in the Social and Military Sciences Faculty, the Polytechnics Faculty, like its university counterparts, remaining largely, a male fortress: in 2002, only 7% of the Polytechnicians were female against 19% of the students of the Social and Military Sciences.

From a 2000 survey (Vande Cappelle: 2000), it appears that 19% of the RMA students had a father who was or had been in the military.<sup>24</sup> Since the end of World War II, recruitment at the Academy has come in fact mainly from the (lower and middle) middle class, due largely to the fact that in Belgium the military profession is not a very prestigious one.<sup>25</sup> For example, in the 2000 survey, 24 % of the students had a father who was a middle manager, 22% a father who was an employee and 13% from the working class.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of educational background, 78% of the students surveyed in 2000 were coming from high school sections with 6 hours of mathematics a week or more (94% in Polytechnics and 67% in the Social and Military Sciences Faculty). Compared with the average high school graduate, this is a huge overrepresentation of people with a heavy mathematical background. For example, in the French-speaking part of the country, in 2001, only 36% of the last-year high school students were in such sections. Although it is true that there is also an overrepresentation of high school graduates with a heavy mathematical background (6 hours a week or more) among first-year university students, except among engineers, the imbalance is less pronounced than at the RMA. For example, in 2001, at the Catholic University of Leuven, the overall percentage was 54% and at the University of Ghent, 45%.

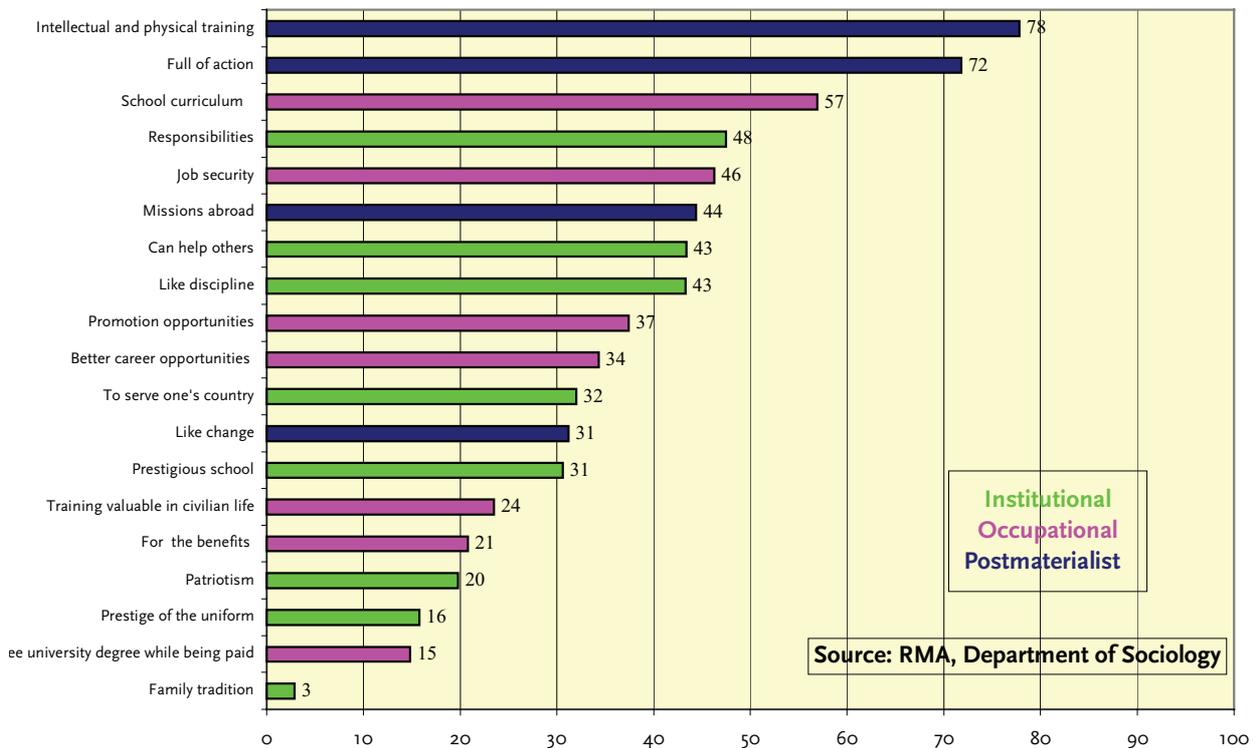
### *Why they come*

Since 1992, the Chair of Sociology has asked applicants or entering cadets why they had applied to the Royal Military Academy. Figure 1 shows the 2001 results for applicants.<sup>27</sup>

As can be seen, the two most often cited motivations were: the training at the Academy combines intellectual and physical abilities (78% said it was a very or extremely important reason) and it is a job full of action (72%). These two reasons can be called 'postmaterialist', i.e. motivations emphasizing self-fulfilment and participation (Battistelli, 1997). The attractiveness of peace-support operations abroad, another motivation that can be categorized as postmaterialist, was cited by 44% of the respondents as a very or extremely important reason. Among entering cadets (and not applicants) who were interviewed in 2000, the percentage was even higher (58%). What is even more interesting is that this proportion has been steadily increasing since 1997. In that year, this reason was cited by 34% of entering cadets and in 1999, by 48%.

Job security, still the most important job expectation of Belgians (young and old alike), was cited by 46% of the applicants and came in fifth position. It should be noted that this motivation is less prevalent among applicants to the Military Academy than among a cross-section of young Belgians.<sup>28</sup> This can be, however, largely explained by the higher educational level of RMA applicants: the higher the educational level, the less

**Figure 1: Why they apply to the Military Academy**  
 (% 'very or extremely important reason', applicants 2001)



occupational one tends to be and the more postmaterialist (Inglehart, 1997).

At the other end of the scale, there are the rather typically traditional, or institutional motivations, such family tradition (3%), prestige of the uniform (16%) and patriotism (20%).

### *What are their plans*

From a 2002 survey among all RMA cadets about their motivation,<sup>29</sup> it appears that 20% of the respondents were definitely planning to spend their entire professional life in the military. More students of the Faculty of Social and Military Sciences than Polytechnicians were thinking so. (24% against 10% respectively) 64% thought it was very likely they would stay except if it did not correspond to their expectations. (in which case they would leave) 12% were thinking of just spending a few years in the military and then leave in order to get a civilian job and 4% were even planning to leave as soon as possible to get a job outside. This mainly applied to Polytechnicians, to the extent that their degree is fully equivalent with the degree of engineer in a civilian university and their training very much valued and sought after in the civilian sector: 17% of them were planning to leave after a few years and 5% as soon as possible against respectively 10% and 3% of the students of the Social and Military Sciences Faculty.

## Conclusion

The reform process currently under way at the Royal Military Academy is intended to make future Belgian career officers better able to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As could be seen, the restructuring process is a logical consequence of two independent developments: the advent of postmodern military organizations and the gradual harmonization of higher (civilian) educational systems in the European Union. By adopting the Bachelor/Master structure for the education of its cadets and by offering a more diversified academic curriculum (two Bachelors and three Masters instead of the present two 'licences' ), it is hoped to both increase the range of skills and capabilities of future officers and to facilitate multinational academic exchanges with other (military and civilian) institutions of higher learning.

But while it is clearly true that, as a result of the implementation of *Vision 2010*, the curriculum at the Academy will become more diversified at the Master level, it is equally true that, at the Bachelor level, the emphasis on a technical education (mathematical and technical skills) remains too strong. Because it was decided to have only one Bachelor in Social and Military Sciences instead of two (as initially conceived), all cadets choosing this Faculty will have to master mathematical and technical skills, irrespective of their choice of Master. This could cancel out the positive impact of having created two Masters (and, more particularly, a non-technical one), to the extent that it could deter people who are 'maths-averse' from coming to the Academy in the first place, therefore condemning the Academy to keep tapping the same – comparatively small and highly sought after - recruitment pool of young people with a strong mathematical background.

So it remains to be seen whether one of the goals of the restructuring process, namely making the recruitment for the Academy more diverse (in terms of skills, gender, and ethnic origin), can be achieved without having a purely non-mathematical/technical option to attract the young people who until now have not opted for the Academy and who choose instead to study law, sociology, psychology, political sciences, history, etc. in civilian universities. Needless to say, such people are very much needed in the new post-modern military organizations. As a consequence of the ever more frequent peace-support operations, more emphasis is indeed given to 'soft' (social, human) skills. By failing to attract and train enough people with such skills, the danger to see a growing proportion of officers being recruited outside the Academy could materialize. This could in turn threaten the very *raison d'être* of a military academy in a small European country.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Joint Declaration on Harmonisation of the Architecture of the Higher Education System*, signed by the Ministers of Education of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom in Paris, the Sorbonne, on May 25 1998 and *Joint Declaration of European Ministers* signed in Bologna by 29 countries on June 19 1999.
- <sup>2</sup> For a more detailed history of the Academy, see Koninklijke Militaire School (1984) and the special edition of the military weekly Vox of April 28, 1999 on the Royal Military Academy.
- <sup>3</sup> This explains the official name of the Academy, i.e. *Ecole Royale Militaire* (translated into *Koninklijke Militaire School*).
- <sup>4</sup> For more details on linguistic diversity in the Belgian armed forces, see Manigart (1999).
- <sup>5</sup> In Belgium, entrance to the various rank categories is conditioned by the obtained degree: university degree for the majority of officers (level 1 of the civil service); high school degree or non-university college for NCOs (levels 2+ and 2 of the civil service); junior high school or elementary degree for privates (levels 3 and 4 of the civil service).
- <sup>6</sup> With the disappearance of the Gendarmerie as a result of the restructuring of the various police corps into one integrated police force with two levels (federal and local), the Academy stopped forming officers of the Gendarmerie a few years ago.
- <sup>7</sup> Based on the special edition of the military weekly Vox of April 28, 1999 on the Royal Military Academy.
- <sup>8</sup> Vox (1999: 3). It should be noted, however, that the RMA does not train only future Belgian officers. It also trains Luxembourgers (every two years in the Faculty of Social and Military Sciences, alternating with Saint-Cyr) and Tunisian Gendarmes. Since more recently, there have also been cadets from Benin, Gabon and Congo-Brazzaville. In 2002, there were 26 foreign students at the RMA on a total of 496 (or 5%). Discussions are under way to also receive officers from other countries.
- <sup>9</sup> Not all career officers, however, have passed through the RMA. There are bridges between the various officers tracks (complementary and short-term officers can become career officers if they meet certain criteria), and between NCOs and officers ('social promotion'). In 2002, graduates of the RMA represented 68 % of all career officers. Source: MoD
- <sup>10</sup> Although in 2002, Polytechnicians accounted for only 17% of all career officers, they represented 41% of all Flag and General officers. In contrast, only 24% of the Flag and General officers were graduates from the Social and Military Sciences Faculty although they accounted for 51% of all career officers. Source: MoD.
- <sup>11</sup> In 2002, 21 out of the 30 civilian professors of the Academy (or 70%) were former

graduates of the Polytechnics Faculty; only 4 (or 13%) were former graduates of the All Weapons division and 5 (or 17%) came from a civilian academic institution. This also reflects a very high degree of endorecruitment among the Faculty (83%).

<sup>12</sup> Quoted from the Mission statement of the RMA.

<sup>13</sup> Students-pilots of the Air component and deck and technical officers of the Navy begin their specialized training while still at the RMA. Students-pilots start their flight training in the third year while Navy cadets begin training as seamen/seawomen in their first year.

<sup>14</sup> These include the maritime environment of the Waddensee in the Netherlands, the mountainous terrain north of the Provence in France, the desert south of the High Atlas in Morocco, and the high mountains in Slovenia.

<sup>15</sup> The implementation of Vision 2010 is a work in progress. The summary presented here is based on first-hand information from the author/participant and on various internal working documents.

<sup>16</sup> See Flahaut (2001).

<sup>17</sup> A comparative study (Manigart, 2001b) of the educational backgrounds of students of the RMA and other universities had indeed shown that a far larger proportion of students of the Social and Military Sciences Faculty came from high school orientations with a heavy emphasis in mathematics (six hours/week or more) than in non-engineering civilian Faculties. 94% of the students of the Polytechnic division and 67% of those of the Social and Military Sciences Faculty had received six or more hours of mathematics a week in the last year of high school compared with only 36% of last year high schoolers.

<sup>18</sup> The cadets will not, however, be completely free to choose one of the two Mas: to a great extent, their choice will be constrained by their choice of Force (Army, Air Force, Navy or Medical Service) and of Arms. For example, the Air Force wants all of its officers to choose the 'quantitative' MA in Management and Weapons Systems.

<sup>19</sup> From the social composition of civilian universities it appears that female students and students from ethnic minorities tend to be underrepresented in engineering and sciences Faculties and tend to choose 'soft' sciences, like psychology, sociology, law, etc.

<sup>20</sup> This is in sharp contrast to the composition of the academic staff: of the 55.4 full-time equivalent teaching personnel at the Academy, 56% are in the Polytechnics Faculty and only 44 % in the Social and Military Sciences Faculty. Furthermore, as already said, in 2002, two-thirds of the civilian Faculty members (23 out of 30) were former graduates of the Polytechnics Faculty.

<sup>21</sup> Unless otherwise mentioned, the results presented here come from the whole popu-

lation (Belgians and non-Belgians).

<sup>22</sup> 2001 statistics. See Manigart (2001a).

<sup>23</sup> Source: Royal Military Academy, Chair of Sociology (survey among all cadets)

<sup>24</sup> In 2002, the percentage of people in the military among the working population was only 1%.

<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, Manigart (1993a).

<sup>26</sup> Military father not included.

<sup>27</sup> These people were surveyed during the selection procedure. Only a portion of them were later accepted to the RMA. For more details, see Resteigne (2001).

<sup>28</sup> In a 1993 representative telephone survey of 1001 young Belgians aged 15-25, 93% of them found job security 'rather important' (Manigart, 1993b). This dimension was clearly the top job expectation. This result was in line with international comparative surveys (such as surveys from the *European Value Systems Study Group*), showing that Belgians attach far more importance to job security than others.

<sup>29</sup> For more details, see Wauters (2002).