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« Towards a European Understanding of  
Academic Education for the Military Officers? »

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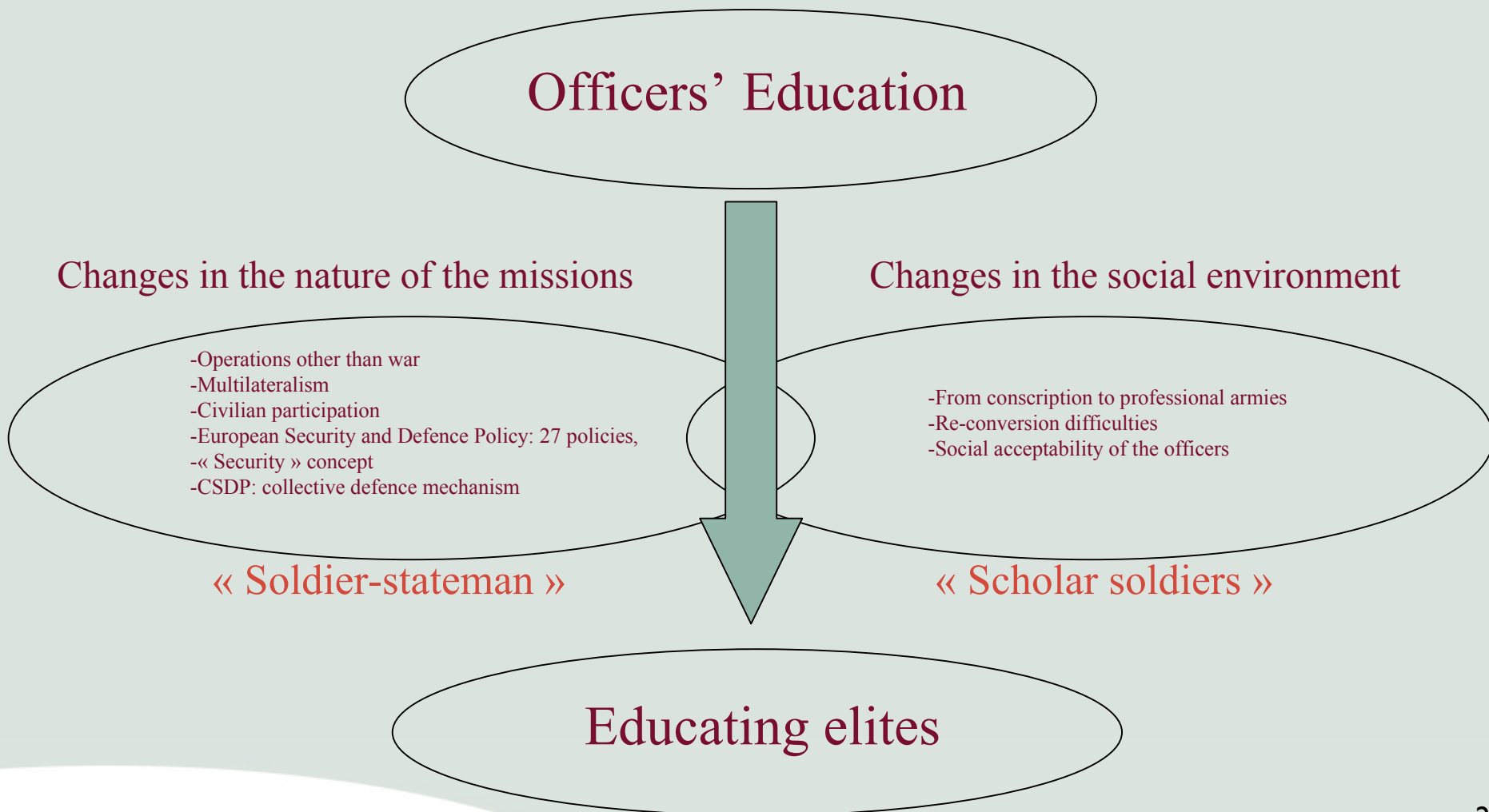
On behalf of the Royal Military School of Belgium  
With the participation of the Federal Sciences Policy



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## Introductory statements: European developments



## Question:

Did the national military officers education systems adapted to such changes of their environment in a common way in Europe?

## Some clues:

- The convergence towards the civilian higher education system
- The latest reforms of the education policies of the schools, academies and universities of defence
- The tools of a European education for a European defence

## 1. Converging with or diverging from the university model?

Pr. Kirkels, Klinkert and Moelers (2003): « Sparta » VS. « Athens » officer

- Sparta officer: elite soldier
- Athens officer: intellectual elite, ready for dealing with the complexity of the social, economic and political tasks of his/her mission
- A call for more academic-oriented education for the military officers

Pr. Caforio (2000): « Divergent » VS. « Convergent » systems with the university education

- Comparing institutions educations
- Six criteria for classification: *selection; teaching staff; share academic/military in the curriculum; organisation of the academic/military aspects in the curriculum; diploma's value; type of socialisation within the institution*
- A ranking
- A call for more academic-oriented education

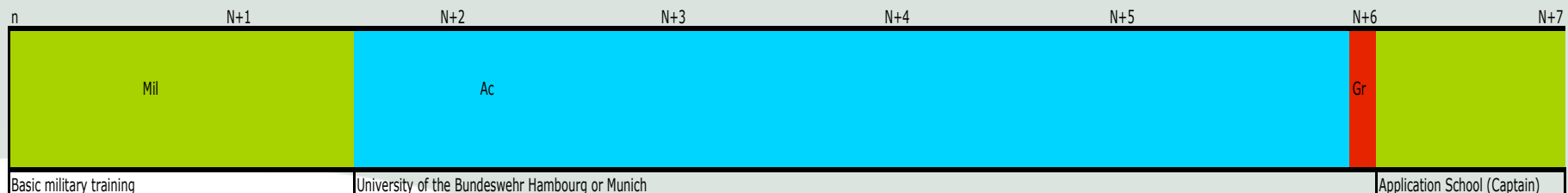
These two distinctions are not contradicting:

- Nature of the officer / socialisation process
- Convergence-Athens and Divergent-Sparta very much interlinked
- Both favour the academic aspect of the education

**Is the convergent-divergent distinction sufficient for the analysis of the education policies of the institutions?**

- Very accurate distinction for « monolithic » education systems
- The two aspects academic/military remain necessary for an officer education
- « divergence » may be hidden

Germany



Distinction « Sparta-Athens » = **why** focusing on the intellectual education?

« Divergence-Convergence » = **What** is done?

Analysis of the education policies = **How** is it done?

Two paths may be taken, in our sense, by the education policies:

- Increasing the amount of academic teachings in the curriculum
- « delegate » parts or whole of the academic education to the university system, ex: United-Kingdom (informal), Slovenia (formal), France (mixed)

## 2. The Bologna Process, a will of excellence for the officer education

### General philosophy of the Bologna Process:

- June, 19th 1999 Common declaration of the European Education Ministries (context: European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe)
- 46 signatory States today but no legal sanction attached
- A monitoring: rotating presidency (assisted by a Bologna Secretariat) collecting data and suggesting actions to be taken in a « Stocktaking » report presented during the presidency final conference
- A global objective: realising the European Higher Education Area

Concretely: Uphold obstacles to actual mobility in the higher education (Erasmus):

- Diploma recognition = European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) : 1 ECTS = 25-30h of student work
- Curricula harmonisation = The duration of the education cycle is not relevant : 180 ECTS Bachelor, 90-120 ECTS Master, free for Doctorate studies
- Quality assurance of the education = Quality-Assurance Agencies European Register recently created with the help of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)



## Bologna for the European education of the military officers

- Officer education institutions are under the authority of the MoDs, then not taken into account in the monitoring of the Process
- « Tuning » program
- The officer education institutions implemented the Process on a voluntary basis
- Prepares the ground for students and teaching staff exchanges or modules exchanges (ECTS basis)
- Coordination of organisation of the curricula: trimesters and semesters
- The Bachelor is often dedicated to the apprenticeship of the national realities of defence and language level might be low. Then we shall not separate too strictly the basic education from the advanced education

### 3. A European education for a European defence

- There is a dynamic of convergence, in the spirit of the Athenian officer concept. A European education culture emerges from the Bologna's implementation. We might then be looking forward to implement an « **ESDP culture** »
- We must not force the dynamic but ease its implementation in the education policies

3 paths may be suggested:

- Formal axis = acting on the **conscience** : make the student-officers aware of their role and the need for flexibility through use of cooperation instruments (Erasmus), languages (English)
- Normative axis = act on the amount of **knowledge** related to the security environment through the amount of teachings and their importance
- Cross-over possibility = acting on **conscience and knowledge** : creating combined modules of education (a European environment for learning European security issues)

## Conclusion:

- Perfect convergence with civilian education is not meant to exist, it is the representation of a dynamic
- Global consensus over the need for academic education: Bologna Process
- This prepares the ground for actual mobility of the greatest number
- We must now transform this convergence of the minds to an « ESDP culture ».