

The "scorpionized" command in high intensity: change in continuity?

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Engagement opérationnel

While the "scorpionisation" of the Army is well underway, the CEMAT has just clarified[1] what a "high intensity" conflict is: "A sustained confrontation between aggressive manoeuvring masses contesting each other to the depths and in different environments all the fields of conflict (physical and immaterial) and whose objective is to defeat the power of the adversary".

Recent developments (technological, societal and geopolitical) have forced the world of defence, and the army in particular, to adapt to these changes. New modern equipment has been delivered, digitization is ubiquitous and the speed of information exchange has increased considerably. However, the fundamentals of the exercise of command remain, including the need for anticipation, the obligation to take decisions and the importance of control. The exercise of command remains and will remain first and foremost a human exercise.

The contribution of "scorpionization" to the exercise of command

The Scorpion program enables the Army to make a generational leap, thanks in particular to equipment (Griffon, Jaguar, SICS) but also to a new approach to the management of its logistics (with the Operational Readiness System - SPO).

Infovalorisation is omnipresent and enables collaborative combat where data exchanges between the players on the battlefield (from the group leader to the armoured vehicle, via the heehelicopters and other UAVs) enable the entire chain of command to benefit from the tactical situation in real time and combat units to be more reactive.

All in all, Scorpion makes it possible to accelerate and better control the tempo of operations by relying on a new information and communication system (SICS). In a "high-intensity" combat, our various headquarters would be required to command the

simultaneous and global engagement of two divisions, while two others would be "on the ground". in the rear", either in reconditioning or in preparation for a replacement of units already engaged. It is thus a question of several tens of thousands of tactical pawns, whose operational intelligence (human, logistical, geographical, intelligence on the enemy, etc.) will be transmitted "in real time" through digital pipes.

Scorpion thus facilitates the reflection of the chief and his staff because the information arrives much faster by being confirmed and considered complete. The command must adapt to "scorpionization" and its technological innovations; it must master the new, essential skills, such as, for example, the use of The command must adapt to "scorpionisation" and its technological innovations; it must master the new, essential know-how, such as, for example, database updates and consultations, which are taking on a more important role in the daily life of a staff officer, or the software that calculates the balance of forces or prepares tactical movements. In the downward direction, orders arrive faster to subordinate units without line losses, or even directly to weapons systems without human intermediaries (automatic fire control, missile guidance, etc.).

This change is fundamental for our staffs as they will have to work faster, the rule of third-time remaining valid. But "time" is getting shorter. Marshal de Lattre recalled that "a tool is only as good as the hand that drives it". This maxim applies particularly to the digital transformation; the training and instruction of personnel in digital tools must be constantly adapted to the changing technical realities that impact the exercise of command.

However, certain constraints remain incompressible, such as, for example, unit travel times, re-articulation or reorganisation of the same units, brief and backbrief missions, or even rehearsal, which are generally indispensable.

On the fundamentals of the exercise of command

Scorpionization", with its automatic transversal exchanges, could modify somewhat the exercise of command in a different logic from the "traditional" pyramidal structure. On the other hand, the notion of delegation (which could be seen as an application of the principle of subsidiarity) is more assertive because the leader cannot know everything and must place more trust in his subordinates. The "scorpionisation" of C2 (command and control) will also have the effect of changing, to some extent, the model of direct supervision and coordination of tactical activities within the land forces. Whereas the command previously used mainly radio to obtain information and communicate orders, the digitisation and automation of the exchange of much information means that supervision is less applicable to activities directly related to the collection of basic operational data, which now comply with highly formalised standards.

Direct supervision is now much more concerned with operational decision-making. Observations of all kinds will be grouped, merged and transmitted to each combat unit that uses them. In this way, forces could become more mobile, smaller in size, more dispersed in theatre and more alert. The use of certain information and communication technologies can also lead actors to take decisions autonomously. Each person involved in an operation, regardless of his or her position in the hierarchy, will have greater room for manoeuvre, enabling him or her to seize, if need be, the opportunities available to him

or her. This autonomy in decision-making is all the more important given that the current context of engagement finds land forces often interwoven with the population and requires rapid decision-making, which would previously have required at least the advice of the direct hierarchy.

Today, digitisation makes the cells that can be engaged with greater autonomy "accountable". Let us conclude from this section that "scorpionisation" will certainly improve, and even facilitate, exchanges between the different levels of command, but in the end, the leader will remain "in contact" with the population. not only the power, but also the duty to decide, possibly in partial or total divergence with his superior authority, according to his assessment of the situation in his area of responsibility. A better knowledge of the terrain, thanks in particular to reconnaissance tools, should not make us forget that only the combatant is able to assess a situation in situ. Foch wrote: "A man who 'takes his responsibilities' is one who has coldly weighed everything, examined everything, who has seen the risks, who has made a report of the risks and the result, judged that the result was worth the risk and beyond, and then decided to walk. »

The verticality of command and the function of leadership "endure"...

With the digitisation of the battle space, then "scorpionisation", forms and styles of command have been adapted to the changing art of warfare, mentalities and technologies. However, in the field, when the "frictions and fog of war" reign and whatever the tactical level, only the leader directs, decides and assumes. Leaders and performers must be able to "win by information" without having lost the qualities of courage, discipline and initiative that characterized them before the digitization of the force. The importance of human leadership and the need for leaders to be "seen" as close to their subordinates (to establish authority and maintain morale) remains.

Whatever the future evolution of our Army, in the context of the increasing digitisation of warfare, this observation must be at the centre of all reflection, so that technology does not take precedence over man and REFLEXION June 2020-2 REFLEXION do not destabilise a chain of command and hierarchy that is indispensable when men - and not machines - are sent into combat, into contact. This is especially true in a "high-intensity" engagement where leaders and circumstances will require their troops to give their best and even surpass themselves. Let us quote Heinz Guderian, who asked his soldiers of the first Panzerdivision in May 1940: "If it proves necessary, I will ask you not to sleep for at least three nights". There are invariants: the human being - therefore the fighter - needs reassurance to give himself totally.

We recognize the true leader by this sign that close to him we feel a physical impression of strength and security, and that we feel ready to follow him wherever he asks. "He would have made us go with him to the end of the world," Napoleon's old grumpy old men used to say. So the "scorpionized" chief will have to find a compromise between proximity to his subordinates and the physical distance imposed / permitted by the digital links. The chief will also, and even more so, have to command. He will not be able to hide behind algorithms and other collaborative work that would allow him to erase himself or refuse to make a decision; nothing is worse than uncertainty and indecision. Let us quote Raoul Dautry [2]: "What men appreciate best in a leader is the command" or a corps commander who addressed his direct leader, General Blanchard commanding the first

group of armies, at the end of May 1940 : "Do what you will, General, but do something." However, we should not fall into the opposite excess where, benefiting from the technological tools that would allow him to free himself from intermediate levels of command, the commander-in-chief of an operation would directly command the "small" tactical leaders.

The High Command "could then be tempted to manoeuvre the various modules of the force itself or, at the very least, to impose on its subordinates the details of their manoeuvre, thus annihilating their freedom of action". This attitude would be irresponsible for the intermediate levels, who might feel that they have lost the confidence of their leader. Didn't Foch say that "the art of leadership is not that of thinking and deciding in place of all one's subordinates in whom laziness of mind leads to discipline. It is necessary to leave all decisions to deputy heads.

In conclusion, the "scorpionisation" of the army is revolutionising the form of combat with the appearance of new means of action and destruction (armed drones), new means of command (SICS, SIA) and new means of intelligence (cybertechnology). This transformation will have an impact on the exercise of command, which will require all players in the chains of command to master these tools (digital in particular) perfectly.

Such mastery will only be possible through intensive and frequent "in situ" use of these tools, a sustained training rhythm that will follow a quality training course. Exchanges between all levels of command will be intensified and accelerated. But the man, the soldier, will remain the heart of the battle.

He is the one who will go "in contact". This soldier, even if "increased", will remain a human being who cannot free himself from human command. The Marshal of Saxony^[3] recalled in the middle of the 18th century that "the human heart is the starting point of everything in war. This is why it can be said that "scorpionization" can be considered, in the field of the exercise of command, as a change in continuity.

1] N 502895/ARM/EMAT/OAT/BEMP/ACT/NP of 18 March 2020.

2] Raoul Dautry is a polytechnic engineer (X 1900), manager of public companies and French politician.

3] Marshal of Saxony: general marshal of the camps and armies of Louis XV.

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