



# THE EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK OF THE ARMED FORCES

GENERAL TACTICS, Use of Armed Forces and New Conditions of Operations

FT-02

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Histoire & stratégie

**The end of the Cold War changed the strategic balance, making war between states in the Western space unlikely, while civil or intra-state wars became predominant.**

**In this context, new forms of threat emerge, which bypass the paths of classical confrontation and further increase the uncertainty inherent in warfare.**

## **Apprehending the fog of war**

The many natures and multiple origins of these threats and associated risks contribute to the thickening of the "fog of war".

### The human factor

The analysis of the fog of war is conceived primarily in terms of "human passions" - that is to say, in changing and apparently illogical terms - because "man is the primary instrument of combat".

Man is the first source of unpredictability and in particular the combatant who is subjected to violence that stimulates his passions and weaknesses. If the psychology of the regular fighter seems relatively easy to understand because it rests initially on shared foundations, on the other hand the irregular opponent is subject to other factors more difficult to apprehend.

- The psychology of the adversary

"Each of the adversaries makes the law of the other" as Clausewitz says, and the law imposed today by the opposing fighter is becoming more and more uncertain. The disparity of cultures leads to a diversity of perceptions. The main cause of uncertainty is the difficulty in discerning the political and military goals of the adversary. The latter is

no longer homogenous, but is made up of a multitude of actors with divergent interests.

- The confrontation of wills no longer follows the rules of the past.

The political or military adversary does not usually have the same modes of thought, nor the same ethical references, nor the same models of action.

- His psychology has itself undergone several notable evolutions due to :
- to the use of terror as a normal *modus operandi* justified by objectives ;
- a return to the most extreme assertions of nationalism or the identity of a people or ethnic group. This phenomenon is sometimes combined with the irruption of a religious dimension that asserts the superiority of its dogmas and practices over other rights.
- to motivations based on corruption, promises of looting, loot ;
- to the effects of drugs, especially those distributed to child soldiers, etc.

Finally, the Western democratic model is not recognized as such in many countries.

Understanding the psychology and ways of thinking of the opposing political and military leaders becomes hazardous. The principle of distancing must be applied so as not to give in to the natural inclination to classify as "good" and "bad", which often makes no sense.

- The psychology of the "rear"

The involvement of the nation remains a major factor of success that is sometimes difficult to bring about. It is also difficult to assess whether opposing leaders may be weakened or even disavowed by their population or whether they have unfailing support. This backward psychology is based on classic factors such as :

- adherence to a policy of defense or intervention to protect clearly perceived interests;
  - the ability of the authorities to limit civilian and military casualties;
  - the support of allies or international organizations;
  - the hope of a mutually beneficial resolution of the conflict.
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- Frictions on the battlefield

The fog of war can also be seen in terms of friction.

By its interactive nature, a confrontation is subject to the psychological forces of all the protagonists and is characterized by permanent backlash. It follows that the course of a war is not limited to the mere sequence of intentions and actions of the parties involved, but generates permanent friction. It is the reactions of the adversary to our own actions

that generate effects that are interpreted, which in turn produce other effects.

War cannot be enclosed in a simple logic of blows and repercussions. Every opponent will seek to take advantage of the disproportionate effects and unpredictable situations resulting from friction. Moreover, he does not always follow the same rules; in his desire to gain the upper hand, he will often seek to change any standards that may exist. This is one of the major reasons why the conduct of a war can change in character and why any war is structurally unstable.

### **The battle of Malplaquet (11 September 1709): morale and uncertainty.**

During the War of the Spanish Succession, Louis XIV's France faced the coalised Europe; in 1709, it suffered a series of catastrophic defeats. Peace negotiations and military operations then go off while the kingdom is affected by a terrible famine due to a particularly harsh winter. Using these setbacks, the Allies' propaganda became very active.

Faced with the enemy troops covering the siege of Tournai, Villars entrenched its 75,000 men on the very compartmentalized terrain around Malplaquet. At the end of the day, while the sounds of peace were insistently echoing across the battlefield, a truly peaceful meeting brought together several hundred officers from both sides on the left wing of the French force, on the initiative of allied general officers. The result of this embrace was that at this point, in addition to the fact that the enemy had recognised its position, the French side believed in peace.

At 7.30 a.m. the next morning, it was on this sector of the front line that, after artillery preparation, the Allies attacked the French vigorously. Destabilised by the events of the previous day, the best French regiments (Guards and the King's) gave in to panic, causing great confusion in the ranks of the left wing, which was partly enveloped by the enemy. The disorganisations that followed broke up the French system, which was only re-established at the cost of numerous, sometimes fratricidal, melee battles. Villars was also wounded, which affected the morale of the French troops.

Pushed back on the left wing and threatened to be turned, Boufflers, who replaced him, sounded the alarm and the retreat was carried out in good order. In the end, however, the Allies suffered greater losses and France was able to prolong the resistance for four years.

### **The framework of the military interventions**

A distinction must be made between the three types of conflict in which military intervention takes place. They differ in the nature of the adversary opposing the engagement of ground forces.

- symmetrical conflicts set armed forces of a similar nature in terms of volume, equipment, technology and doctrine, and using the same military strategic models, against each other. More often than not, these will be violent conflicts aimed at military victory.
- Asymmetric conflicts bring into opposition armed forces that are also similar in nature, but with different structures, volumes, equipment, technologies and doctrines.

- Asymmetric conflicts are of a type in which there is a disparity in the nature of war, the means and ways of acting.

Whatever the type of conflict, the design and conduct of operations depends first and foremost on the political goals chosen and the choice of the politico-strategic option. Military analysis then determines the strategic mode that can be used, i.e. the broad lines of military action that flow directly from the strategic option and the constraints imposed by politics.

- Within the framework of the collective security policy of states, there are three goals policies can be considered, depending on the severity of the crisis and the the moment it is taken into account:

- avoiding the imbalance before it happens,

- restore the balance that existed before the crisis,

- create a new balance because there's no going back to the old one.

- Once the political goal has been set, there are three possible politico-strategic options for achieving it; they are not necessarily military. The Charter of the United Nations, through its Chapters VI and VII, contributes to the search for such options. objectives.

- Participation in a peaceful settlement is largely developed in Chapter VI of the UN Charter.

- The handling of pressure and sanctions is dealt with in Chapter VII of the Charter. Military means can be engaged in this option. They will be necessary to carry out demonstrations of force or to implement measures in the event of an embargo.

- The option of using armed force means that the solution envisaged will not be able to be achieved through the use of military forces within the framework of an operational strategy to be determined and conducted.

- For a given crisis, different military strategic options are developed, which propose a combination of actions to satisfy the political option chosen. The Joint Doctrine Document Force Employment in Operations<sup>4</sup> distinguishes between three families:

- Support for prevention and security, including the contributions of the armed forces contributions to political, diplomatic and economic actions, as well as to the military actions of a third country and finally to humanitarian and security actions.

- The control of violence, the aim of which is to prevent, contain and control the escalation of violence. It follows that these actions cannot be carried out without running the risk of drawing a mandated force into a lasting armed confrontation that the political decision-maker is trying to avoid.

- Force actions seeking a military victory over a designated adversary, which does not necessarily imply the complete destruction of its political, military and economic defence capability. The objective in the current strategic context is to force an adversary to

renounce its military objectives in the theatre of operations.

- Once the military strategic option has been decided, operations conducted by a national or multinational force, are planned and conducted as a threesome. levels: strategic, operational and tactical.

- The strategic level is that of the design, preparation and overall conduct of operations in different theatres. Strategic action, therefore, aims to lead the adversary to negotiation or defeat in the shorter or longer term.

- The operative level is the level at which operations are planned, conducted and sustained in a given theatre of operations in order to achieve the desired effect and to attain a given military objective. It is therefore the level of cooperation and coordination of joint actions, the responsibility for which lies with the theatre commander.

- Finally, the tactical level is the level at which manoeuvres are prepared, conducted and executed in order to achieve the objectives defined by the theatre commander. For land forces, this is the responsibility of the Land Component Commander. The Land Tactical Manoeuvre is an integral part of the Joint Operational Manoeuvre.

In the past, the planning and conduct of operations was based on a specific *modus operandi* (e.g. coercion). This representation is no longer appropriate because it does not adequately reflect the complexity of situations and the variety of postures taken by forces in the same theatre of operations.

Indeed, on the same theatre and at the same time, can be conducted :

- coercive operations used for crisis management but which remain war actions even when engaged against an asymmetric adversary;

- the restoration of general security, carried out in parallel to oppose the perpetrators of violence and, depending on the case, by the army or the security forces

- participation of the armed forces in reconstruction: resumption of political and administrative life, restoration of justice, economic recovery, organisation of daily life.

This ambivalence of conflicts forces the land forces to respect a triple operational posture, i.e. to be able to simultaneously carry out actions of force, security and assistance. This triple posture persists throughout the military engagement.

Military engagement is described in its entirety along a continuum of operations: intervention, stabilisation and normalisation.

During the course of a campaign, military action evolves along these phases - with no precise and overlapping limits - in order to contribute to the establishment of the conditions indispensable for strategic success.

- Ls intervention: imposing the military decision

The initial intervention is a predominantly military engagement. The objective of this

intervention phase is to impose the military decision. This phase is indispensable but not sufficient.

- Stabilisation: creating the conditions necessary for peace

Stabilisation is a decisive phase in achieving the strategic objective. It involves various types of action consistent with the three-fold operational posture of land forces:

- securing actions, which aim at controlling the environment and include:

- Actions to combat armed rebels or fight against activists;
- actions to control physical space in order to ensure security and freedom of movement;
- public security actions, including the protection of persons and property and the restoration of public order

- Influential actions favouring modalities that are not strictly military;

- actions in support of the population, including the disarmament and reconstruction of armed and security structures;

- actions to revive political, administrative and economic life.

- Normalization: the return to a self-sustaining peace

The final phase of the return to the rule of law includes the transfer of responsibilities.

At the same time, reconstruction is an essential element of the normalisation phase. It takes place in various fields:

- support to central and local authorities for public administration, justice and home affairs and health;

- support for the economy and social life, particularly education;

- the continued reconstruction of military and security systems.

The complex environment of confrontation and the uncertainty that accompanies it represent a set of challenges defined as "the fog of war". Military effectiveness rests first and foremost on understanding the human environment while integrating the many factors of evolution that act on it.

However, interactions linked to the unpredictability of the battlefield cannot be ruled out. They give rise to a phenomenon of friction which maintains the instability of war.

The framework for the use of armed force is determined by a strategic objective. This, derived from the political goal, is the focal point of military action. Operations must establish the conditions necessary for strategic success by creating the necessary security after establishing control of the environment. The objective of operations, described along a continuum - intervention, stabilization and normalization - is the

restoration of normal living conditions for the population of a political entity reintegrated into the international community.

In Morocco in the 1920s, Marshal Lyautey liked to say, "Every officer knows how to take over a village at dawn, but I am looking for officers who know how to take over a village at dawn and open the market there at noon". Recalled in various forms by several of his collaborators, this sentence obviously means that the coercive way of seizing a village will be chosen differently depending on whether or not one integrates the objective of holding a market at noon (normalization). This is why in Morocco, even though Lyautey had many operations conducted by force, he also often acted through demonstrations and personal contacts to obtain rallies to the sultan's authority with a minimum of fighting. It also often happened that the end of the fighting was marked by forms of common celebration in which the belligerents were sincerely reconciled.

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