



The challenges of remote warfare(s)

Gaining in contact

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Engagement opérationnel

Distance warfare exposes Western societies to many challenges, both financial and ethical or moral.

1°) The vulnerability of Western societies

Admiral Casabianca believes that the sensitivity of Western societies to emotion and external influence (which is not always the case in the West) is a major obstacle to the development of a new society. (which he describes as "vulnerability") is part of a real inability to sustain an operation over a long period of time. He also refers to the development of the "zero death" concept. In this context, the use of modern, precise, long-range weapons is tempting and reinforces the illusion, in the public opinion, of the possibility of controlling conflicts from a distance, without physical exposure.

Distance can be perceived by citizens as an abstract dimension that can lead to indifference or even insensitivity to the real nature of the fighting.

In a society with a "high level of pacification", distance from reality is also measured through the images conveyed by television and social media. General Facon poses the question: "Has distance warfare killed consent to engagement? ». The level of commitment to universal service will provide an interesting answer in this respect.

2°) The limits of the technological whole

Technology is precious and even constitutes the writing of our History," says Mrs. Castillo. But if the use of weapons at the top of the spectrum, in that they allow the control of space, may appear militarily effective to Westerners, the operational experience of the last few years shows that they alone cannot win the decision. On the contrary, the long-term effects can make the search for lasting peace more difficult: "the Western

world considers that effectiveness has become the sole measure of success, both in warfare and in economics. Yet part of the world is written with other historical and warlike measurement criteria, with other means of transport and another sense of distance between the fighter and the enemy".

This is obviously the case with asymmetric wars. And to quote Colonel Hervé Pierre: "Where we would have to eradicate any terrorist action in order to declare ourselves victorious, it is enough for the adversary to commit one in order to assert his victory, as proof of his existence, and therefore of our inability to silence him, despite the means involved".

Technology can also be turned against the person who uses it. Mr Klein, referring to American work, explains that killing a terrorist from a distance would have counter-productive side effects, since this act is perceived by enemies as a clear lack of courage and therefore arouses more vocations.

Technology in itself cannot be the only vector of victory. For Ms Castillo, it is an illusion to believe that every human problem has a technical solution. She points out that technology only solves problems that are already technical.

Several speakers referred to the dominant strategic thinking inspired by an American military nature favouring technological solutions: drones today, robotics or artificial intelligence tomorrow. Technology makes it possible to win battles, but less and less wars.

3°) The cost of war

The long time it takes to regulate crises, both remotely and through contact, raises the question not only of political will, but also of cost.

The cost of remote warfare will increase as a result of :

- new conflicts in space, in the cyber world;
- the proliferation of space-based challenge capabilities (A2AD), which accelerates the development of penetration capabilities and increases the cost of protection;
- the development of drones and satellites;
- the rise in the capacity range of regional competitors and major powers;
- the dissemination of levelling capabilities;
- the logic of logistic stocks, as opposed to a just-in-time logic. Symmetrically, the cost of contact warfare is increasing due to the following factors:
- attrition linked to the multiplication and improvement of armaments (IED, missiles);
- the increase in the cost of tactical mobility (helicopters, Scorpion programme vehicles);

- the cost of precision munitions;
- the problem of energy control;
- the development of combat robotics.

This cost leads Admiral Casabianca to wonder: "Will it be possible to fight a war at a distance over a long period of time tomorrow? How can we avoid a lasting commitment that would make us vulnerable and predictable? ».

4°) Law, ethics and morals

The question of law, standards, ethical and moral considerations, has defined the basis for the use of Western forces since the Second World War. But won't other societies or other civilizations impose on them a change in these norms? Admiral Baduel believes that we have a duty to prepare for this asymmetry and to consider this question.

French law regulates the use of robots and artificial intelligence. General Beaudouin reminds us that French law prohibits making an entity that is not responsible (and a robot does not have an autonomous legal personality) do things. Only the person who programmed it is. He retains the consequences of a war at a distance which can also have the effect of killing virtue: "there would come a time, with such autonomous systems, when a war that no longer makes sense would be waged".

In the absence of international treaties, however, determined extremists or authoritarianisms could break away from these rules and use robots and artificial intelligence to turn to pure violence.

5°) The problem of autonomous weapons

Salas are designed to eliminate opponents while saving lives. But in a world where information is as important and influential as military force, the use of information can have counter-productive side effects and affect or even challenge the legitimacy of the action of force. For Ms Castillo, the SALA will force a limited war ("otherwise their use would be monstrous"), measured (i.e. judicialised) and intelligent warfare ("i.e. a war that avoids the useless").

6°) Proxies

Remote warfare can also be conducted by proxy. Armies use proxies to reduce the risk of losses or to conduct an indirect strategy as part of the comprehensive approach. Proxy manoeuvring has many short-term advantages through the contribution of their knowledge of the theatre, its population and its cultural heritage, and through networking. For General Gallet, "this reticular strategy, which progresses by oil stain, in contact with the populations, makes it possible, if one is sufficiently skilful, if the conditions of pressure and temperature are good, to create a critical mass and finally form a popular movement likely to prevail".

However, particular attention must also be paid to the possible negative consequences of the use of these proxies. General Gallet refers in this respect to the human tragedies that

the withdrawal of force from a territory or country can cause when a political solution has not yet been found.

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