



Operational command and complexity, what are we talking about today? 2/4

The decision-making process in an operational staff today

Colonel Fabrice CLÉE, chef du pôle études et prospective

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"War has taught me that to succeed, I must have a purpose, a plan, a method. To have a goal, you have to know what you want to achieve. To want, to make a plan, you have to know what you can do. To have a plan, the general rule, elementary in daily life, for the following purposes come up with any kind of a result. Pick one for yourself. Do it - you a plan. Set your agenda. And with that, have ideas, concentrate your efforts, don't scatter your time and energy. Careful. »¹² - Ferdinand Foch

In the understanding of modern strategists, the concept of the from Command and Control corresponds to the theoretical part of a set of means and processes allowing the management of large complex human systems, designed to be engaged in operations whose objectives are related to issues strong, even vital. The command covers the creative expression of the will of a leader, necessary for the accomplishment of a mission and calls upon his intelligence and intuition. The command relève of the art of leadership, while the control based on organizations, structures, methods and techniques, is a matter of command science. The control aims to put implementation of action levers to be engaged in order to achieve goals and manage contingency, i.e. risks and opportunities. arising in the course of action. If this distinction is conceivedtually attractive, practice shows that the two concepts are not always so clearly differentiated, however. The performance of C2, as we have seen, is fundamentally linked to the performance of the to the notion of decision making before and during action. It is based on a permanent capacity to acquire and then synthesize quickly the information strictly necessary, and never sufficient, allowing the design (command)then the conduct of the action (control). Decision-making in war, more than in the business world, involves taking into account a manoeuvring adversary . One of the aims of operational decision-making is therefore to counter the opponent's manoeuvre in order to defeat him. To do this, it is necessary to design upstream the way to seize and then, in conduct, to preserve the initiative, which is consubstantial with freedom of action in the face of the adversary. C2 perform mancetherefore implies a de facto capacity to react and adapt to risks or opportunities that appear during the course of the game. Finally, this performance requires the ability to produce, receive and transmit information and orders more quickly than the opponent in order to adapt the manoeuvre in progress. The purpose of operational decision-making is therefore to constantly align goals with the resources held, in an uncertain and

changing environment, in the face of one or more opponents who are also manoeuvring and reactive. This alignment presupposes a sequenced, efficient, flexible and modular commitment of generally counted resources, both in physical space and in intangible fields. The performance is thus based on human aptitudes, organization and technical capabilities, making it possible to produce operative and adaptive thinking. These aptitudes and capacities correspond to what is called a command system.

As we have seen previously, decision-making in war aims at :

- mand the adequacy of available resources with an goal to be achieved set by a higher level, over time and with maximum cost-effectiveness and an intake of minimal risk ;
- malso to seize every opportunity to enable the company to prevent the opponent from achieving his own objectives (destruction, stalemate, diversion);
- contrer the opponent's actions aimed at preventing us to achieve our goals;
- reto reduce the impact of the unforeseen events in the operating environment; - to reduce the impact of the unforeseen events in the operating environment.on our actions.

It is therefore these goals that underpin the organisation of a operational staff (or command post) and its to allow for authoritative decision making.the greatest possible flexibility and responsiveness when it comes to the the development and then the conduct of a manoeuvre. There are three levels of responsibility within such a structure. The first is that of the decision (the Chief) and the management (the Chief of State-major). The second level is that of synthesis, coordination, and and proposals (the Operations Centre Chief and the Chiefs of the of cells). The third level relates to the execution level. and driving (editors)¹³. To obtain efficiency and reactiThe coordination of all these levels is, of course, a matter of course. paramount. In addition, the ability to have a permanent of lead time is essential to enable the chief to make decisions, to give directives to his staff, in order to produce orders thatcan be properly exploited by subordinate units .This time constraint , as well as thepriority concern tooptimise and complement the actions of the vectors involved,implies a circulation of permanent and iterativein-formation; an organisation of the operations centre without compartmentalisation ; and an ability for the chief to take decisions very quickly . Therresult is a necessary centralisation ofthework of the cells, to ensure optimal coherencein theconduct of the action, while preserving a relative serenity for the cells in charge of anticipation .The coherence of all these actions is therefore based on methods (CPOE14, COPD, MEDOT), a formalised distribution of tasks to be accomplished (procedures, etc.),and the use of a common methodology(CPOE14, COPD, MEDOT, etc.).¹⁵) and processes. The term process comes from the Latin pro (in the sense of "forward") and from cessus, cedere ("togo, to walk ") which means to go forward, to move forward .The Larousse uses three meanings for this word. A process can refer to :

- un orderly sequence of facts or phenomena, following a certain pattern and leading to some thing, the process of a crisis for example;
- un continuous sequence of transactions, shares constituting the way of doing, of making something, the processes of manufacturing for example;
- la way that an individual or a group, has to behave in a mannerter for a particular result in accordance with a scheme precise.Since its return to the integrated structure of the Alliance, the France has adapted the operating modes and processes of its staffs, in order to guarantee their interoperability.with those of NATO. The main processes implemented within

an operational staff are therefore today linked to the acquisition of knowledge (Knowledge development); to the planning (planning & refine); the drafting of orders and their control (execute); according to levels at target (targeting), the information operations (Information operations) and the operationalization of the effects achieved (operational assessment). The coordination of these processes is the responsibility of the chief of staff. It translates into a general comitology cyclicity and a synchronisation of staff work (battle rhythm), covering all decision-making meetings contributing to these various processes (Orientation, Scoping, Mission analysis, Decision, etc.).

In a very conceptual way, it is possible to describe succinctly how these processes, supported by the phases of the OODA cycle the rhythm of an operational staff, pers are the basis for decision making (figure below). The first phase of the cycle is upstream and during action. It refers to what is called Situation Awareness in Ota nian terminology. It consists both in understanding the general framework of the action and also in analysing, evaluating the opponent's potential and trying to understand his intentions. While this phase lies at the heart of the intelligence function, of which it is the *raison d'être*, it is not limited to this phase alone, but also includes all actors who can contribute to the understanding of the operational environment, including non-military actors. In addition to maintaining information bases on all factors that may be usefully taken into account during action, the intelligence function is also required to contribute to the assessment of situations during action. The purpose of the second phase is to determine the most effective *modus operandi* and then to draw up operational plans. This is called operational planning. This design phase aims to make the most of the adversary's weaknesses and to make the best use of available resources to achieve a desired end state. Planning defines the modes of action and the means to be implemented, and is twofold. Firstly, the process leads to the elaboration of a generic plan, which is intended to be broken down into orders of conduct. Secondly, it enables contingency plans to be drawn up (branch, sequel, contingency plans), designed to deal with unexpected risks or opportunities during driving. While planning must be inherently extremely agile, experience shows that the danger often comes from an overly rigid plan and the cultural inability of decision-makers to deviate from it.

Modes of action and availabilitysitives must be flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of the to unforeseen circumstances without difficulty. As stated the Emperor, " ...the great art is to change during battle. Woe betide anyone who comes into battle with a battle plan definitive »⁶. More prosaically, an American fighter dreadedtable will say a few years later: " Everyone has a plan 'till they get punched in the mouth »⁷. The third phase of the cycle is that of the conduct of the action itself. It consists of to describe the broad outlines of the plan in more detail, in order to transforming into orders assigning missions to subordata and precisely defining the coordination measures. It then proceeds in a looped process that leads to the drafting and distribution of orders of conduct, followed by observation and analysis of results, assessment of residual capacity of the opponent (battle damage assessment) and its reactions. The cycle is then resumed, adjusting the mode of action if necessary. (refine), in order to achieve under the best conditions and if possible at the least cost, the goal. The conduct of the actions is the afThe conduct of actions is the responsibility of the operations centre, which has the means to command and control the operations. and monitoring the situation in real time. Through a Operational Assessment Process (operational assessment), the role of the intelligence function is crucial to enable, in good time, to determine and then possibly adapt the effects to be produced, the goals to be achieved to guide action ; to identify the strengths, weaknesses, risks and opportunities (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats - SWOT) in the opponent and in the friendly forces. Decision-making therefore necessarily goes hand in hand with the implementation of a system of indicators to judge the achievement of the objectives that have been set (effectiveness measures , etc.).¹⁸ and performance measures¹⁹ The form of the system is largely

based on companies' quality control systems.

The relative simplicity of the figure above, however, masks an fundamental aspect of a PC in operation : the linearity and sequential logic of these processes are not in is only apparent. Hazards, friction and uncertainty involve the reality is that a decision is never fixed, but constantly reassessment/adaptation. Ongoing collection of information decision making processes therefore gives these processes an iterative, incremental and non-linear form. However, mainly because of the NATO certification system to which our staff over the past few years, we have often seen a strict, mechanical and sometimes unintelligent application of methods related to processes that have become complex and too rigid. The coordination needed to implement these processes ultimately translates into a comitology at the synchronization generally cumbersome, complex and time-consuming (multiplication working groups, steering committees, steering committees, etc.), which may affect the overall efficiency of the structure. Furthermore, the excessive and too often inappropriate use of tools office automation (Powerpoint, Excel) and representation techniques complex environments (Mindmapping, schematics, The fact that this is not only a problem formilitary organisations ,but also in the world of themilitary , is a real problem in the world of themilitary , which is not only a problem formilitary organisations ,but also in the world of themilitary .²⁰. Indeed, staffs, both civilian and military , are struggling to find the right balance between the conceptual reduction of complexity, which is essential for decision-making, but which gives the impression of a deceptive thinking .and an overly granular representation of reality, from which no spirit of synthesis emerges and which ultimately only contributes to an informational saturation of the decision-maker. General James Mattis is said to have made this very pragmatic statement : "Powerpoint makes us stupid" .²¹.

12 Foch, Ferdinand, quoted in Bugnet, Charles, Listening to Marshal Foch, Grasset, reissue 2017.

13 Army Glossary (EMP 60.641, ex TTA 106), CDEC, 2018 edition. Op. cit.

14 The NATO intelligence method adopted by the French army since 2012 is the Comprehensive preparation of the operational environment (CPOE).

15 Standard operating procedures (SOP).

16 Bonaparte, Napoleon, War maxims and thoughts of Napoleon Ier, Jacques Dumaine Military Bookstore, 1863, (<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k864783>), reprinted. Hachette, 2012.

17 Mike Tyson on the eve of his famous fight against Evander Holyfield in June 1997.

18 Measures of effectiveness (MoE).

19 Measures of performance (MoP).

20 Bumiller, Elizabeth, We Have Met the Enemy and He Is PowerPoint, New York Times, 26 April 2010. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/27/world/27powerpoint.html>

21 Citation by General James Mattis, which he reportedly gave following a situation report on Afghanistan.

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Author (s) : Colonel Fabrice CLÉE, chef du pôle études et prospective

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