



Entering the SCORPION culture first and taking the initiative 1/2

Land Forces Doctrine Review

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The forthcoming arrival of SCORPION in the Army will allow, thanks to a new generation of information management technology, the further development of decentralised combat and will lead to increased autonomy at the lowest tactical levels. Seizing initiatives and opportunities will be partly linked to tactical actions and decisions. of these subordinate elements. In France, however, seizing an opportunity is only is not widely delegated to tactical commanders in the field and is primarily considered by Level 3 or higher headquarters for planning and manoeuvre plans.

One of the challenges in preparing for the arrival of the SCORPION system is to prepare leaders to make the most of the capabilities it offers and thus allow the development of a spirit of initiative. Although it may present risks to the manoeuvring of the higher echelon, this room for initiative left to the subordinate and allowing opportunities to be seized can lead to significant tactical successes.

Within what framework and how is the seizing of initiatives and opportunities to be taken? Is it delegated to the tactical chief? How can this measure be applied to the French model?

Although constrained by the nature of today's conflicts, the initiative of tactical commanders develops through the skilful combination of understanding of the environment and the trust associated with a command by purpose.

While the "contact" model sees the return of initiative in both the doctrinal reference literature and in the components of tactical missions, the "contact" model sees the return of initiative in both the doctrinal reference literature and in the components of tactical missions. The German model and its command philosophy appear to be a key to the Army's first entry into the SCORPION decentralised combat preparation, one of which is the of prospects will remain command by purpose.

Seizing initiative, opportunity and the "In Touch" model

In his book *Theoretical Tactics*³⁵ General Michel Yakovleff defines the initiative and the opportunity, and highlights their common characteristics and links. "The initiative is the control of the decision. It is inseparable from the presence of options. Seizing the initiative means gaining control of the next move, and conversely depriving the opponent of the ability to exercise an option for the same "move". The purpose of the combat is thus, initially, to conquer option(s) to the detriment of the opponent". At the same time, he specifies that "creating an opportunity means using particular effects on the ground or the enemy to force him to act in reaction, making a mistake and thus giving the leader an opportunity for effective or decisive action on the tactical level. It means creating situations in which the initiative can be seized and exploited. "He thus emphasizes the need to seize the tempo through dynamic action and thus the notion of action that puts the enemy in reaction, to enable the tactical commander to think about the next move and to be able to engage the reserve on an action of opportunity.

However, in the French headquarters, opportunities are addressed in the MEDOT³⁶ but mostly from the brigade level.

Within level 3 headquarters, during the planning phase of the operations, the opportunities are presented in the plan of action in the form of a double entry table, presenting the context, the goal, the space-time framework, the actions to be carried out. However, both the plan of manoeuvre and the opportunities table are not disseminated to subordinate levels.

Another view that allows us to grasp the notion of seizing an opportunity is that of certain great warlords who were adept at forward command. For Erwin Rommel³⁷ the chief, who has mastered the overall situation, the mission of each of its units and the action of the higher level, must be at the forefront because it has an overall vision and is in the best position to make the best decision. For this reason Rommel planned his "visits" to the front in advance. In fact, his staff conducted the action while he was on the front line with the unit he had targeted, at the decisive location and at the estimated critical moment, so that he could quickly analyse the situation under consideration. In this way, he directly commanded the subordinates concerned by means of orders in action and immediately gave his staff the following instructions corresponding to these units and their actions, the rest of the manoeuvre remaining in the hands of the staff. The time limit for taking a decision was therefore reduced to its minimum, the gain obtained was maximum and reflected the emanation of the will of the leader.

However, this type of command seems obsolete because of the emergence of battle space digitization and electronic ubiquity that predominate in contemporary operations. The arrival of the SCORPION battle, which is an integral part of the "In Touch" model, will reinforce this state of affairs.

The "In Touch" model has recreated the divisional level and the ability to arm an army corps. In CP system exercises, allowing joint training of the various staffs in the face of a symmetrical enemy, fire management and deep combat become a priority again for levels 1 and 2. In this context, the mission "exploit" returns to the spectrum of offensive maneuvers.

Exploiting is about seizing an opportunity, in the spirit of major effect, without impairing the Force's ability to achieve the desired end state. It is about taking advantage of a temporary vulnerability (physical or intangible) of the enemy in order to obtain the

maximum yield from it and to impose on it the rhythm desired by the Force by preventing it from re-establishing itself in its decision-making cycle.³⁸

Exploitation³⁹ is an action of conducting operations that is anticipated at levels 1 and 2 in different physical and immaterial fields of application but requires knowledge of the intent of the N+2 levels of command for the tactical echelons in the field.

Understanding of operational objectives or even operational design⁴⁰ is thus important for subordinates. These could then be presented at battalion levels to facilitate their overall understanding. In the same way, the order should allow subordinates to infer opportunities from higher levels, without falling into the excess of prescribing them and thus curtailing initiative. Finally, the risk of a bad decision linked to an opportunity that would not have been taken, could be captured would be attenuated.

One of the examples illustrating the importance of knowing the objectives of the operative level and the opportunities associated with it is that of the Battle of Alsace, which began in late 1944.⁴¹ General de Lattre's army general de Tassigny, commander of the 1st French army, launched on November 16th an operation to conquer southern Alsace, the main objective of which was the liberation of the territories west of the Rhine. On November 18th, the 1st AD attacked in direction of Delle and its units made a breakthrough eastward. The exploitation of this breakthrough was not total, and the opportunity of a large scale enveloping maneuver, allowing the fast capture of Mulhouse and especially the encirclement of a great part of the of General Wiese's 19th German army, could not be seized. The breakthrough of Delle brought the 1st French army to the gates of the Rhine, allowed the capture of Mulhouse, but, while an offensive towards Colmar was possible, no large-scale encirclement manoeuvre was put in place. In the end, the 19th German army recovered north of the Doller, maintaining positions west of the Rhine and a large part of its operational capacity while preserving its logistical lines to Germany. The factors that deprived the French army of this tactical victory are linked to the lack of knowledge, by the tactical leaders engaged in contact, of the intentions of the command as well as possible opportunities. Moreover, General de Lattre, not thinking his units capable of such a success, did not give them the order to push on Colmar. The chief's confidence in his subordinates, although necessary to conduct an operation, was not sufficient. Finally, knowledge of the stakes and subsidiarity would have made it possible to be more responsive in decision making in order to maintain the initiative over the enemy and thus prevent him from recovering quickly.

The factors of success of an operation are therefore knowledge of the framework of action and of the intention of the higher levels, subsidiarity and mutual trust, initiative-taking combined with rapid decision-making.

While orders should encourage this initiative, they should not be too rigid to prevent them from having a counterproductive effect. This is therefore consistent with the leadership style of leaders and training in command.

Fostering initiative: the school of command

The two main types of command that characterize the majority of military leaders, and which are taught in training schools, are defined as follows in FT 05⁴² command by

objective and directive command (or order).

In the first one, significant leeway is given to the subordinate levels, which must imbue themselves with the idea of the leader to achieve their goals. This form of command, although sought after but not necessarily adapted to the conflict situation (overwhelming levels, essential sampling capabilities, etc.). imposing their centralization, low volume of troops involved) often leaves room for the directive command whose goal to achieve, the means to be implemented and the methods of execution are given by the superior. The result is a centralisation of command which is similar to that of Operation Barkhane.

However, the initiative, which is more akin to command by objective, is clearly defined and encouraged in the Blue Book⁴³ of the Army. It is described there as the "ability to make the necessary decision, to show determination, imagination and creativity, spontaneity, while remaining faithful, respectful and concerned about collective efficiency". In today's operations, if individual determination and collective, is a characteristic of the French military, the imagination and creativity goes back to headquarters for order design. As for rigour in execution, even if it contributes to guaranteeing the success of the mission given by the staff at the tactical level, it restricts initiative because the freedom of action is reduced to conduct and reaction, in the face of enemy action.

Agility⁴⁴ which reflects the ability to deal with surprise, to react to the change, to provoke it and make it unpredictable, must therefore be associated with active rigour in execution, and will be permitted by the trust built up upstream. This point is in line with the idea of Marshal Ferdinand Foch, who defines "active obedience as a consequence of the constant call to initiative". This agility and initiative, made possible thanks to this active rigour in execution, contribute directly to the performance of the command system.⁴⁵

35 Michel Yakovleff, *Tactique Théorique*, Économica, 2006.

36 PFT 5.1 MEDOT: Method for developing a tactical operational decision, 2014.

37 German Generalfeldmarschall of the Second World War (1891-1944).

38 ATT 902: Corps Manual of Operations - ATT 903: Division Manual of Operations.

39 There are two levels of operation: theatre operation, which is a new mission, requires a re-articulation or even an engagement of the reserve, and which can be envisaged over a long period of time, and tactical level exploitation, which is an extension of the action, may be more limited in scope, with its own means better able to respond to the paradox of seizing the opportunity - adapting the Force.

40 PIA 5-B_PNO (2014): Planning at the operational level: Methodological guide.

41 Eugène Riedweg, *The Liberation of Alsace, September 1944 - March 1945*, Tallandier, 2014.

42 NP_CDEF_FT 05: Command in Operations Exercise for Tactical Leaders, 2010.

43 *L'exercice du commandement dans l'armée de Terre, commandement et fraternité*, 2016

44 Future Earth Action, 2016 : Agility (SOF #3) is the continuing ability of forces to respond to the changing nature of an environment characterized by variety, turbulence and uncertainty.

45 Future land action, 2016: command system performance (FSO No. 8) must ensure the optimised management of operations by taking into account 4 imperatives interdependent: intelligence of situations, acceleration of decisions, plasticity of organizations, reduction of vulnerabilities.

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