



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

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Another model of command, inspired by command by objectives and allowing a different development of initiative, is that of the German army, the Bundeswehr. This philosophy of command, corresponding to a genuine culture of war whose origins are mainly attributed to Helmut von Moltke, is named the Auftragstaktik⁴⁴. The objective of this command philosophy is both to allow initiative and to impose it on the subordinate. The subordinate "can and must show initiative.

Encouraging initiative is thus the guiding principle of German military training. Here, officers learn how to think more than just what to think. In order to encourage decision-making in times of uncertainty, three areas are important and interdependent in the Auftragstaktik: knowledge, willingness to take responsibility and independence. Orders are precise but do not dictate everything to the subordinate, so the subordinate will really have to work out his mission, how he intends to carry it out, as long as he ultimately satisfies the superior's objective. In the drafting of tactical orders, particularly in paragraph 3a, the concept of operation emphasises the command intention (as in the case of the major effect in France), and provides subordinates with the framework to make their own decisions in accordance with the general plan⁴⁵. Second, to lead the action that follows from this concept of order where only the objective is given, the joint commander, up to level 5, will not follow a "set path" . ⁴⁶ " in advance, he will choose each time the procedure and the route according to the situation and the terrain. The tactical commander will always have to be adaptable and, as the one who can best appreciate the situation (like Rommel going forward), he will be in the best position to make a quick decision that is best suited to the situation. The effect will be a succession of timely decisions resulting in a better physical speed in relation to the enemy, whose decision tempo will be slower.⁴⁷

This performance and this way of fighting the battles are recounted by Hermann Balck, a senior German officer and lieutenant-colonel during the French campaign of 1940, who will finish as Lieutenant General in 1945. He considered that the singularity and relative superiority of the German officer of the Second World War lay in his ability and freedom to take initiatives within a naturally controlled environment. In German culture, a

subordinate was rarely blamed for taking the initiative. A quick and timely decision will be more effective than a better but later decision. A tactical leader will be able to modify and adapt his orders according to his assessment as long as they still meet the intent of the higher levels.

The Auftragstaktik also enabled the German army of the inter-war period, whose volume was very small, to prepare its rise to power. Indeed, as the training schools provided courses enabling students to work up to the N+2 level, future managers were ready to take on higher responsibilities and absorb large numbers of personnel. Beyond the ability to replace a leader who had fallen in combat or to be promoted or even assigned to a higher level structure, the leader, to whom objectives are set rather than specific missions are assigned, fully understood the intention of levels N+1 and N+2. He was therefore in a position to identify what could represent an opportunity for his chief. This culture of warfare was instilled at all levels down to the lowest levels. By way of illustration, in 1944, the German commander of the Marseilles parade ground ordered all of his units to take part in combat training, according to different themes (Forest, Mountains, action in urban areas, anti-tank combat), where the players played their own role and then that of level N+1 or even higher. These instructions will have made it possible to develop subsidiarity, the impregnation of knowledge, and the development of a new approach to the fight against terrorism. The ability to take initiative at higher levels and the ability to grasp an initiative, which proved to be an asset during the fighting in August and September 1944.

In order to prepare the necessary adaptation to the SCORPION battle, this German model could be the subject of particular attention from the French model, which has the ideal human and technological breeding ground to make it its own.

Prospects for developing initiative and promoting decentralised combat: command by purpose With SCORPION, decentralised combat will be generalised. The centralisation of actions and orders could therefore become a handicap for units that will need a certain amount of autonomy to make the most of the technological capabilities of their equipment and gain the upper hand over their adversary.

The systematised use of electronic ubiquity, restricting the initiative and decision making of subordinates, will have to make the The systematic use of electronic ubiquity, which restricts the initiative and decision-making of subordinates, will have to be carefully monitored to ensure that force commanders and chiefs of staffs intervene only when absolutely necessary in the manoeuvring of echelons in the field. Today the chief is at the rear in his PC but different information systems such as geo-referencing⁵⁰ The use of the latest technology, communications, surveillance sensors and battlefield digitisation enables it to monitor a precise and regularly updated situation. This electronic ubiquity of the leader thus enables him to be at the front and play the role of a Rommel moving to the critical place to seize the opportunity where it is felt. However, this copy of a scene from a microtactic remains without soul, without human feeling. The vision is thus only fragmented and only takes into account parameterized, geo-referenced, digitized and anticipated elements. The friction, the fog of war, the morale and the feelings of the leader and his troop can only rarely be transcribed to the PC via technology. Unsuitable or even incoming orders too late could then be transmitted and have negative effects on the maneuver. Indeed, Helmut von Moltke once said that "there are times when the officer cannot wait for an order, [that] no one is in a better position to decide than he is. »

The tactical commander is therefore the main actor in the decision-making process. Thus he will necessarily be the decision-maker in phases of decentralized combat, in particular in those where the SCORPION combat will be implemented. Overall coherence in the actions carried out will be sought and the notion of the effectiveness of each tactical level will have to be addressed in a more global system associating the supervising levels. This overall effectiveness is described by Marshal Foch⁵¹ "The model of efficiency is that of centralized design and decentralized implementation, centralized coherence and decentralized initiative". Orders must therefore provide the tactical commander with the means to act freely. share of responsibility and its opportunities to take initiatives will be high. The tactical commander will thus be able to allow opportunities to be seized at higher levels, the result of careful planning combined with the trust placed in the subordinate.

To this margin of initiative given to the subordinate, the following lines must be associated red drawing the outline of the spirit of the action to be carried out while doing appear the free space in which the initiative will be free to be taken. This is to share mastery and acceptance between all levels. of the risks involved in tactical action. General Yakovleff⁵² classifies the acceptance of risk according to 3 categories: low if it does not jeopardize the mission in case of failure, significant if it involves the success of the mission, critical if it involves the survival of the unit. According to him, the control of the risk passes by a perfect knowledge of the means employed and the framework of the mission which will then make it possible to mitigate it. In his view, risk assessment is the responsibility of the chief and must be disseminated widely to subordinates so that they know his job and how best to advise the chief, thus avoiding a decision that would lead to at greater or even critical risk.

Freedom of action, room for initiative, taking into account and accepting risks, are the aspects that appear essential to the preparation of the SCORPION fight. All of them are related to command performance.

The stakes of the SCORPION combat show the importance of improving command performance. In addition to selection, training and operational culture, the organisation of the command, and above all the spirit with which it is exercised, are among the main lines of effort contributing to operational decision-making⁵³.

For General Vincent Desportes⁵⁴ As man is the primary factor in unpredictability but also the best tool for adapting to friction, it is therefore essential to trust him and, as a result, to define his mission and his bubble of freedom of action. The latter appears to be one of the keys to optimising the tactical possibilities that SCORPION decentralized combat will offer.

With a centralized command pushed to its limits, the multiple adjustments necessary for the proper conduct of the war will not be possible. Command must be decentralized and based first and foremost on an understanding of the superior's intent. Second, it must promote the full responsibility of the subordinate for the fulfilment of that intention. Finally, individual initiative and the freedom of action which derives from it will make it possible to adapt the ways and means to the needs of the success of the whole as well as possible.

Trust in man, in the tactical commander, takes on its full importance here: "To trust in man is to command with him and through him". On the other hand, in the case of a command that is directive and pushed to the extreme, giving an order by skipping a hierarchical level presents the risk of loss of confidence at the intermediate level and thus a decline in

command performance in the medium term.

Command by purpose, as described by General Desportes, represents the resulting command philosophy. Inspired by the *Auftragstaktik*, it is based on two essential principles: man's ability to adapt in the face of uncertainty and the indispensable mutual and tolerant trust between leaders and subordinates. Command by the purpose is a command through mission and freedom of action. Orders must guide and frame the initiative while at the same time creating the conditions for its maximum expression. Without prescribing everything, they must be clear and allow not only the understanding and appropriation of the intentions and objectives of levels N+1 and N+2, but also the positioning vis-à-vis peers within the framework of general action. Thus the main effort, to which the tactical commander and his unit contribute, is to known to all.

The subtlety of command by purpose is to achieve the right balance between unity of action and freedom of action. Ultimately, the leader gives his order in such a way that the subordinate fully understands his intention, specifies what effect he wants to achieve, and the reason for this will.

To this end, he gives sufficient means for the accomplishment of the mission and limits the coordination measures to the maximum so as to not to restrict the capacity for initiative. In fact, subordinates decide by themselves about how they're going to carry out their mission.

With this type of command, tactical commanders will be able to adapt and meet the standards of tomorrow's decentralised combat and make full use of the capabilities offered by the SCORPION system.

Ultimately, the Army must prepare its leaders to meet the following requirements to the challenge of adapting to the SCORPION culture. The development of this culture will necessarily take place across the entire continuum training-education-commitment, in peacetime as well as in operations, with a special emphasis on the exercise of command.

Thus the SCORPION command will have to be closer to command by purpose and to the *Auftragstaktik* where the triptych knowledge-confidence-initiative will have a more prominent place than ever before.

Command agility, coupled with active obedience, will enable leaders to adapt to the challenges of tomorrow's engagements and enter first in the SCORPION culture.

45 It also describes a number of tasks (Aufträge) that can be carried out in order to the intention of the superior but nothing more. The subordinate will deduce at his level his mode of action, with a letter and a spirit clearly defined and enabling him to achieve the desired end state (Entschluss).

46 Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Myth of the Blitzkrieg: The Western Campaign of 1940*, Belin, 2003.

47 Thus, the theory that the German army was superior to the French army in 1940, in terms of manpower and equipment, was falsely founded. It was indeed the performance of its command, and therefore its way of waging war, commanding, adapting and seizing the initiative that enabled it to make a difference during the French campaign.

50 Blue Force Tracking: BFT geo-referencing system.

51 Marshal Ferdinand Foch, *De la conduite de la guerre*, Economica, 2000. This book was written in 1905, two years after his first book *Des principes de la guerre*, and which allowed him, based on studies on the German command during the 1870 campaign, to confirm the validity of his principles.

52 Michel Yakovleff, Tactique Théorique, Economica, 2006.

53 Doctrine Letter No. 12, Réflexions sur les principes fondamentaux de la prise de décision opérationnelle dans l'armée de Terre, CDEC, August-September 2018.

54 General Vincent Desportes, Deciding in Uncertainty, Economica, 2007.

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