



Strategic and/or operational principles?

Workshop N°1

CDEC

Published on 20/07/2019

Histoire & stratégie

The discussions on the relevance of distinguishing between the principles of warfare and the principles of operations were open and rich, covering a topic of interest shared by all the participants in the group.

Indeed, the subject touches on the "intimacy" of the military and doctrinal thinking of each nation. Moreover, if the exchanges allowed the expression of cultural nuances and differences, which had a strong impact on the approaches of each nation, there are nevertheless some areas of convergence to be noted.

What brings us closer - Understanding the nature of the principles

It is agreed by all participants that the principles are consubstantial with the profound nature of warfare, are timeless and do not evolve with technology or geopolitical or societal variations. Thus, while these have an impact on the way war is fought, they do not alter the profound nature of war. These principles, embedded in the deep culture of different countries, form and nourish military thinking, without necessarily being explicitly included in military documentation or the drafting of orders in the form of procedures.

However, in the course of the discussions, the need emerged for a complement to these immutable and intangible principles. This complement takes the form of an intellectual object that makes it possible to "operationalize" the principles. Thus, the French Facteurs de Supériorité Opérationnelle (FSO), the principles of Spanish operations and their Australian equivalents are flexible instruments, adapted to the terrain and capable of taking into account changes in the operational environment.

What separates us

The main factor of divergence between the nations represented at this forum lies in the multiplicity of state organizations in each, implying different understandings of the strategic, operative and tactical levels. In France, for example, the specificity of the chain of command and the role entrusted to the President of the Republic - head of the Armed Forces, induces an original relationship between the strategic level and the subordinate levels.

Moreover, the relationship between the political and military, as well as its nature, varies from one nation to another. These specificities have consequences on their relationship to principles and their purpose. Thus, should the principles apply only to the field of operations and not to the strategic field? Should they also apply only to the military or should they also be accessible to political personnel? According to Swedish doctrine, for example, the principles of war are an object of execution and do not have a political dimension. They are linked solely to violence and solely military, and are the prerequisites for success. Any principle of war that is not intended to lead to military victory is not ultimately a principle of war.

Synthesis

The principles of war are the expression of a unique reality, the use of force in a confrontation of wills. The difference between the principles of warfare and the principles of operations is expressed through variability in the roles and responsibilities incumbent on the different levels of decision making.

However, if the participants agree that by 2035, no break that could change the nature of the principles of warfare is anticipated, binding developments in their application are to be expected. The effects on these modalities of application will be different at the strategic, operational and tactical levels.

Title :	CDEC
Author (s) :	CDEC
Release date	13/07/2019

[DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT](#)
