



## Are infovalorization and collaborative combat a tactical revolution?

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Engagement opérationnel

Major General Philippe Boucké began his career in the 121st All-Arms Class of the Royal Military Academy. In 1994, he joined the staff of the 17th<sup>Armored</sup> Brigade in Spich, Germany, as Deputy Operations and Training Officer. He joined the First Regiment of Chasseurs à Cheval in Bourgléopold in August 1996 as Operations and Training Officer. In 2015, he was posted to the Defence Staff in Evere to work in the CHOD Cabinet, within the GPS (Governance and Policy Support) cell, of which he became Chief in July 2016. Generalmajor Boucké is appointed Deputy Chief of the Strategy Staff in 2017. In 2018, he is appointed Aide de Camp to His Majesty the King by His Majesty King Philippe of Belgium.

The Belgian Army has adopted the principles of war, namely: proportionality between goals and means, freedom of action and economy of forces. These principles were founded by Professor Henri Bernard in the 1970s. He considered that any art or science is based on a series of principles which constitute its foundations. The principles of military art are thus destined to be immutable and their imperative and permanent implication requires the observation of certain rules, in which all the nations represented in this forum can probably find themselves. These principles and rules are in theory applicable at all levels, from the top of the state to the last echelon in maneuverability. In decision-making processes, these principles underpin the elaboration, analysis and comparison of possible solutions. Moreover, in practice, they are most often used in the study of the past.

These principles do not seem to be in need of being revolutionised by infovalorisation and collaborative combat. The strength of command and the beauty of military art lie precisely in their ability to transcend technological developments, based on a number of principles, in order to achieve victory. From the principle of proportionality between goals and means follows the following rule: constantly seek intelligence, in order to modify one's goal according to the means available, or modify one's means in order to achieve the imposed goal.

In this respect, infovalorisation is intended to provide more targeted, potentially more accurate and up-to-the-minute intelligence (if necessary through a direct link with the source, be it a drone or a human). This should lead to more adequate actions - Napoleon having defined warfare as a simple and all-embracing art and Professor Henri Bernard having stressed the importance of being able to take and execute quick and timely decisions in a battle where actions and reactions follow one another -, albeit with risks of friction. Our doctrine also gives pride of place to the leader who implements it. As part of the Scorpion programme, conducted in partnership with France, the concept of the "augmented leader" has been developed, aimed at enabling the leader to understand, decide and act faster than the adversary, while being better protected and more effective.

Western armies have thus developed a culture based on a dichotomy between the simplicity of principles and the uncertainty and difficulty of execution, which is reflected in the concept of "Mission Command" and the maneuvering approach. In this respect, infovalorisation, collaborative combat and new technologies in general could open up new perspectives, in terms of allowing the application of simple principles and favouring the sometimes complex execution of established plans. However, should surprise, uncertainty and disappointment no longer be at the centre of victories? What will become of digital concealment in the face of fake news or attacks on digital communication lines? Guaranteeing their freedom of action by preserving their lines of communication (including digital ones) should be a permanent concern for leaders.

Moreover, space/time data will have to be profoundly modified. Collaborative combat should produce reaction times of less than a minute, at previously unsuspected distances. The separation between the deep, the close and the rear should thus be questioned. In cyberspace, the security of the base should also be questioned. At the lowest tactical level, infovalorization and collaborative combat should put the maneuver approach back in the focus of the leaders, forcing them to concentrate on the major effect sought, i.e. making the enemy maneuver irrelevant. In the event of friction or dysfunction, the quick decision of the visionary leader and the resilience of the "de-enhanced" soldier should nevertheless continue to prevail.

With regard to new technologies, the challenge will therefore be to envisage the possibilities, in a logic of rupture, by considering the potential contributions in terms of surprise, uncertainty and even economy of forces. Leaders will thus have to be able to apply simple principles through new concepts, while being able to master the associated technologies. Since NATO doctrine has highlighted the interdependent nature and equal importance of the three moral, conceptual and physical components of combat power, in order to achieve truly modified combat power, new technologies will have to be subjected to a triptych: conceptual appropriation, testing in training and testing in combat situations.

This is the approach adopted in the Scorpion programme, through experiments on simulators and application in the field, even before the user manuals are written.

**In short, new technologies are available to us. The greatest challenge will be to see them in the light of the principles and rules of warfare, to take advantage of them and be actors in the associated developments. Only properly trained managers will be**

able to meet this challenge. In addition to learning the principles, the rules of military art and the mission command, all leaders will have to become familiar with new technologies - the "big ones" to use them properly and the "small ones" to get the best out of them.

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