



## Conclusion of the symposium

### the principles of war in 2035

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Histoire & stratégie

A graduate of the ALAT, Major General Patrick Bréthous is a graduate of the Ecole spéciale militaire de SaintCyr. He has participated in numerous operations, notably in Somalia and Bosnia. In 2004, he was appointed Chief of Staff of the ALAT Special Operations Detachment, then in 2006 Chief of Staff of the Special Forces Land Brigade. Chief of the Operations Planning and Conduct Centre of the Armed Forces Staff between 2013 and 2015, he commanded Operation Barkhane in 2015-2016. As Commander of Special Forces Land from 2016, he is currently Deputy Chief of Air-Land Operations at the Land Staff.

The approach to war is certainly linked to a country's culture, but the principles governing military action at the strategic, operational and tactical levels are generally shared by all Western armies. The principles of warfare in 2035 will not be called into question but will be adapted in line with geopolitical, technological and societal developments. In order to continue winning battles, tactical manoeuvres have evolved.

The nineteenth century saw the combination of artillery and cavalry; the two World Wars combined infantry and massed artillery, tanks and aviation respectively. In Indochina, support aviation and parachutists were combined, then it was the turn of helicopters and light infantry in Algeria. The air campaigns are followed by envelopment manoeuvres with a mechanised corps for the Gulf War and special forces actions in Libya. In the Levant, as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the air campaigns were combined with allied, Iraqi, Kurdish and Syrian support, special forces and deep anti-terrorist action. It is therefore necessary to invent modes of action in order to prevail and, if the means change, the principles remain the same.

In order to understand how principles are translated into practice, it is necessary to learn from past operations. As head of the Operations Planning and Conduct Centre and in the

Serval mission, the application of the principles of warfare has been intuitive. Operation Serval was an anticipatory mission, requiring a manoeuvre of influence, intelligence, reconnaissance, pre-positioning of ground units, a special forces grouping and the establishment of an operational command post.

After UN authorisation and a request from the Malian President, the operation was launched. The preparation of this mission therefore required anticipation and concentration of efforts. First, there was a combination of special forces and deep strikes to enable the build-up of a logistical operational base and an operational base of departure for the reconquest. The concentration of efforts resulted in a two-pronged raid in the depths towards two strategic objectives, Timbuktu and Gao, with the aim of stunning the adversary. At the same time, the pursuit of deep strikes made it possible to liberate the country and to simultaneously design Operation Barkhane, by proposing to the African allies a regionalised operation on the scale of the five G5 countries to hunt down terrorists in depth.

Within the framework of Operation Barkhane, Operation Vignemale, deployed 1,500 troops in northern Niger and northern Mali. The aim was to impede the flow of terrorists and neutralize them. Influence, intelligence, logistics and tactical manoeuvres were required to deploy the forces. Finally, direct action against the enemy had to be taken. All this was in accordance with the principles of warfare: preserving and building up a resource, preserving freedom of action in the face of the unexpected, concentrating efforts to have mass, having lightning power through aviation, and maintaining uncertainty in the enemy.

Past experiences should help prepare for tomorrow. Thus, adaptation is imperative. The paths of reflection and anticipation must be realistic. The pre-eminence of the global strategy supported by continuous reflection at the interministerial, interallied and interdepartmental levels must be stressed. At the heart of the reflection, notions of kinetic modes of action are essential for the 21st century. The aim is to coordinate non-kinetic means in order to integrate them into the global manoeuvre: electronic warfare, defensive or offensive cyber action, Stratcom, manoeuvre via proxies and local actors, global actions. These new capabilities will be the subject of new professions in the armed forces.

It is also certain that the threat is becoming tougher and that our adversaries, whoever they may be, already use and will continue to use means similar to ours: armed drones, complex attacks, camouflage and influence. Important technological advances such as artificial intelligence and robotics must also be taken into account. They are changing the tools of combat. This is France's objective through the Scorpion concept and infovalorized combat, which make global knowledge a fundamental resource for winning.

The President of the French Republic has set the objective of making the French Army the reference in Europe. In the event of a major coalition commitment, the reflections on the principles of war must be done jointly.

Finally, the key point is the will to fight. France must preserve the culture of its regiments and its solid chain of command. At the heart of this organization, man remains the central point. The soldier remains the main instrument of combat, to quote Ardant Du Picq.

To envisage the next conflicts, it is therefore necessary to prepare jointly and concretely. Thinking broadly, broadening our fields of vision: this is indeed the purpose of this forum. The objective now is to pursue these reflections and apply them. Remaining open to the prospective future in order to be ready: this is one of the missions of the Earth Reflection Centre.

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