



David Galula, from the Capitol to the Tarpeian Rock?

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Beyond the way military operations are conducted, Galula's main contribution is to demonstrate that counter-insurgency warfare is essentially political. Not only would the military aspects account for only 20 per cent of the missions to be accomplished, but it would be a mistake to entrust the military with civilian functions, whether in the areas of police, justice or general administration. Politics holds the key to the success of operations.

In Algeria, Galula shows that any lasting success was impossible as long as part of the military hierarchy and especially the civil power were convinced that the only way out was independence. Beyond the Algerian case, he explains why pacification can only succeed if the political power offers a credible, advantageous and lasting alternative to the rebels. If this is not the case, the operation as a whole is doomed to failure. Indeed, as has been said, in order to free the population from the insurgents' grip, it is first necessary to separate it militarily from the rebellion, but then it will be necessary to bring about social (schools, clinics), economic (infrastructure, etc.) and social (schools, health centres) progress.) and political progress (local democracy, creation of political parties) that will make the loyalist camp appear more desirable and profitable to the population.

What is already difficult to achieve in a counter-insurgency war, waged by a government on its own territory, becomes infinitely more complex when the operation has to be conducted in coalition with reduced forces and in a foreign country whose institutions have collapsed or lack credibility.

This raises the question of what objectives can actually be assigned to Western armed forces in external operations. If pacification is not within its reach, what is the meaning of the action and what intermediate goals can it achieve? Depending on the case, one can think, for example, of the achievement of the purely military phase at the beginning of the process, or then of the containment of the adversary's capabilities. But also what should be the duration of the presence of the force, the conditions for its withdrawal and the

acceptable risks?

The mission should of course be determined by the political authorities. But is it always aware that, at the same time as it gives it to the military, it must ensure that it provides the conditions for success? It is not just a question of material resources or appropriate rules of engagement, as we often hear. Galula recalls the need for a favourable political environment with reforms and civilian resources to support taking over and then becoming the dominant force in the operation. If not, would it not be wise to engage only in operations of a more limited nature?

David Galula is therefore not the author of an infallible method for winning counter-insurgency wars; that's for sure. But in seeking to draw lessons for the future from his successes and failures, he did not have that ambition.

To send him back into oblivion today would be to ignore all that he can bring to officers to carry out their RETEX or to analyze the operations and methods employed. While there may be no point in putting one of his books in his musette to go into combat, a thorough reading of the OPEX experience certainly opens up a fruitful dialogue between different generations.

Finally, it can be suggested that David Galula should step out of military circles to become known to the diplomats and politicians who hold 80% of the conditions for the success of pacification operations. It is indeed to them that he is addressed, but it is undoubtedly by them that he is least read!

So let us hope that Galula will be studied and that fruitful and trusting exchanges will take place between the different actors of our country's external action. The commitment of the armed forces is a weighty decision that deserves to be carefully considered because, as Alfred de Vigny said : "The word, which too often is only a word for the man of high politics, becomes a terrible fact for the man of arms; what one says lightly [...], the other writes on the dust with his blood. »⁵

⁵ Servitude and Military Greatness, 1885.

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