



## In the face of high intensity, what tactical commander tomorrow?

Synthesis of the Army Doctrine and Command Education Centre (CDEC) symposium

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**On 6 February 2020, the École militaire hosted the annual Military Thought Symposium on the theme "Faced with High Intensity, What Tactical Leader for Tomorrow? ». As with previous editions, this symposium is part of the movement to renew military thought within the Army, as advocated by the CLS, instigated by the Centre de doctrine et d'enseignement du commandement (CDEC) and its director, Major General Michel Delion.**

Deputy Françoise Dumas, Chair of the National Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the National Assembly, Army General François Lecointre, Head of the National Defence and Armed Forces Committee, and General François Lecointre, Head of the National Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the National Assembly, François Lecointre, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces (CEMA), and Lieutenant General Bernard Barrera, Major General of the Army (MGAT), honoured this fourth edition with their presence.

The debates, structured around round tables, brought together high-level speakers to answer these two questions: is high-intensity warfare just high-tech warfare?

Between rupture and continuity, can today's leader claim to be tomorrow's leader?

The intersection of civilian and military approaches, in the fields of tactics and strategy, philosophy, psychology, ethics, medicine, industry and economics, has made it possible to better understand the relationship between high-intensity conflict and tactical command.

Such a reflection appears particularly relevant for the French Army, which is reflecting on its command model in an operational context marked by complexity complexity and potential brutality, and where future and foreseeable advances in equipment, technology

and artificial intelligence will bring about major transformations. This article is a summary of the proceedings of the conference; it will no doubt enable the reader to clearly identify the main issues related to this new operational situation.

High intensity would be the dominant paradigm of the war of the 21st century. After the asymmetry of the conflicts that have marked the last decades, the technological levelling that is currently taking place would hint at peer-to-peer confrontations in the future, as well as considerable human and material attrition. If a definition of high intensity seems to have emerged from the symposium, it would be this: a symmetrical fight against an enemy with similar or even superior capabilities in both the material and immaterial realms of conflictuality[1].

1] Long and wearisome, high-intensity warfare would also be total: at the strategic level, all the productive and moral forces of the population are engaged in order to achieve victory. This mobilization of energies would primarily concern industry, which is confronted with a need for innovation and technological mastery, as well as an increasingly thick order book. Industrial adaptability would therefore be the key to facing a high-intensity, long-term war.

We can nevertheless be confident, with Mr Lebreton, Scientific Director of the continuing education centre of the Ecole Centrale Supélec, in the ability of manufacturers to reconfigure their tools to produce the "new generation" of energy. We can nevertheless be confident, with Mr Lebreton, Scientific Director of the Continuing Education Centre at Centrale Supélec, in the ability of manufacturers to reconfigure their tools to produce the required effort, or even to reconstitute the stocks consumed, provided that the Defence Industrial and Technological Base (DITB) is given an extended scope that goes beyond the manufacturers. Any industrial war has a logistical aspect. However, in our modern societies torn between fragmentation and the drive for openness, mobilisation is no longer an obvious necessity. High intensity and high technology would go hand in hand.

Technological progress serves, first of all, to modernise operational readiness in order to make soldiers more effective and lethal on a large and complex battlefield. Technology from DATE (Decisive Action Training Environment) "optimizes" the officer throughout his training.

Over the long term, the prior training of forces would be decisive for a chief of staff in managing the pressure generated by battle peaks. The intensity over time, which could be measured in years, would lead to wear and tear on both the armed forces and the population. This attrition would influence political and strategic decision making and would have repercussions on the tactical chief's decision-making.

In the transition from direct command at the company level to indirect command at the battalion level, technology provides staff officers with the best and quickest information. In terms of command and control (C2), high technology improves the exchange and processing of information.

It would, however, increase the vulnerability of the senior tactical commander, so the organisation and position of CPs would have to be reviewed, including with a view to a return to mobility. Technology brings undeniable added value in terms of target acquisition and cross-checking of field data.

It would, in short, enable fairer and faster decision-making based on a more accurate assessment of the situation, as well as more efficient and controlled destruction. It would also have its drawbacks. The new information and communication technologies would make the line between truth and falsehood porous, and would make it necessary to master knowledge.

While artificial intelligence can rapidly build neural networks free of cognitive bias by exploiting supra-data, the laws of robotics must be reaffirmed. Under these conditions, can the leader still make a difference?

Depending on the unit, the answer to the question of high intensity should be different. While the high-tech warfare approach would be suitable up to the brigade level, the higher echelon would engage in a more psychological struggle where the proper understanding of the opponent would depend on different intellectual parameters. In order to win at high intensity, should everything be based on mass and redundancy?

While essential alongside interoperability to shift the balance of power to its advantage, the reduction of vulnerabilities and the According to Lieutenant General Pierre Gillet, commander of the French Rapid Reaction Corps (CRR-Fr), reducing vulnerabilities and exploiting potential would remain the priority.

The only certainty for the leader is uncertainty, so reactivity, understood as a mixture of intellectual agility and initiative within a formation adapted to decision-making, is necessary. In particular, the notion of surprise should be integrated into the planning phase and the risk management plan.

Although high technology has established itself as a determining element of high intensity, it must not, and cannot, replace man in the decision-making process or erase his pre-eminence in the modalities of action. The technological dimension, which is indispensable for responding to the broad spectrum of warfare, would remain merely a tool for optimising staff planning and manoeuvre.

Consequently, the demanding selection of the military elite would place a premium on human qualities. On this point, France and the United States share the same vision of victory centred on the "warrior spirit", which General Todd R. Wasmund, General Michon's new deputy who commanded the 3rd Division in Marseille, was keen to stress.

But, in order to cope with the high intensity, it would also be time to make room for atypical profiles. "Armies are organisations", to quote Mr. Le Bihan, a strategy consultant and researcher specialising in the history of strategic thinking, "(...) and when they are not under stress, they tend to be very normative". And Mr Lebreton insists on the importance

of keeping a "king's fool" close by.

Having "the right to say out loud what everyone else is thinking", he reminds the major decision-makers of certain realities. The tactical leader would therefore be at the heart of the high intensity, with his resilience, endurance and exemplary nature, but also his physical and mental vulnerabilities. In order to meet the challenges of tomorrow's war, do we need an "augmented leader"?

High-intensity warfare would require, first of all, reducing the risks of occurrence for the military leader. Engaged in a long and intense confrontation, his biological capacity to withstand external and internal constraints would be put to the test. However, there are too few testimonies from leaders regarding the management of sideration and trauma, two biological survival responses.

This hinders the application of the principle of prevention. These biological risks can be mitigated through training and healing. The most realistic exercises possible should be conducted to simulate potential sidereal states and thus improve knowledge of human vulnerabilities.

In a high-intensity conflict, however, the tactical leader could be faced with such cognitive overload as surprise, uncontrollability, negative intentionality and fatigue. Again, the tactical leader group escapes the health services study of risk factors following traumatic confrontation.

Virtual reality and practical guides are tools evoked by Marion Trousselard, medical researcher at the IRBA, head of the normal class services, to better manage tactical commanders. The biological cost of warfare, especially high-intensity warfare, would increase due to the "increased stress" that the tactical leader faces, especially on an emotional level.

General Lecointre, Chief of the Defence Staff, sums up the isolation of the commander in these words: "A leader must take responsibility. He must make choices. But he must also never forget what he has chosen to do". Of course, this solitude is not total, since the chief talks to his staff. But high intensity is dangerous in that it generates wear and tear that can affect the entire command; observation, vigilance and safeguards therefore serve to limit deviations. Among the aberrations to be dealt with, the insidious danger of burnoutfiguration would figure prominently.

Among the aberrations to be treated, the insidious danger of burnoutfiguration is said to be a major one. It corresponds to a biological wear and tear of systems manifested by a loss of interest and of any link to pleasure, a closing of affects, a distancing of human beings coupled with a tendency to objectify them. Generated by stress, burnout would be visible in the tactical leader through a degradation of cognitive or emotional empathy and the loss of the sense of meaning attached to commitment. Burnout, which is difficult to treat beyond a certain stage, requires a long period of care and a therapeutic resumption of activity.

In addition to physical and mental resilience, the 21st century leader will also need to be cognitively effective. If the artificial increase of the officer depends on biotechnologies, his "natural" increase would be based on individual and collective situational intelligence. He would have to know the needs and ethical expectations of his soldiers, the values of the society in which he is evolving, and ensure controlled subsidiarity of command. Indeed, how do we train the tactical leader of the future? "The reality of the battlefield is that you don't study it," said Marshal Foch, "(...) simply do what you can to apply what you know.

Therefore, in order to be able to do a little, you have to know a lot and well". Hence the importance for the officer to acquire a complete curriculum. His initial training makes him a soldier and a citizen with a broad general culture, while later on his passage to the War College enables him to position himself as a senior executive leading the State on the military level. While this career path evolves with the times and technological means, the prospect of high-intensity warfare would not alter the intrinsic qualities expected of the tactical leader.

The officer would still be distinguished by certain fundamental skills, such as the ability to make sense of action and the ability to adapt. He would remain a fighter, a leader of men, at ease at the tactical level as well as at the operational and strategic level, including as an ally, on mainland France or in external operations.

War throws man into a situation of uncertainty, where moral strength is necessary to win the decision, and requires him to accept friendly losses as well as the physical destruction of the adversary. "Tomorrow's leader will thus be the same as today," except that he will be shaped by the environment and society. The leader of tomorrow will be the same as he is today," says Major General Patrick Brethous, Deputy Chief of Army Air Land Operations (SCOAT).

To deal with high intensity, it is interesting to study the approaches of our allies. The Spanish Army, for example, is transforming its armies and command models by incorporating the concepts of complexity and instability, but also uncertainty and the omnipresence of information. New technologies are being incorporated into training programmes.

This operational preparation standardizes the generic force structure by giving priority to responsiveness, autonomy and interoperability. These training programmes integrate generic, divisible and transformable capabilities in order to prepare to operate in all places and under all circumstances, on a capability model that is sufficiently powerful by fire and mobile by manoeuvre.

Experiments are conducted over three years by a brigade in Almeria. Brigadier General Eduardo Diz Monje of the Spanish Army hopes to obtain convincing results by 2024. This Spanish force, called Force 2035, would lead to a new generation of C2 that would combine risk-taking and timely reactivity based on sometimes fragmented information.

In order to speed up decision-making, the model focuses on the notions of delegation and adaptation. It is integrated into the chain of command in three phases: it is first

applied during initial training, then planning is adapted to evolve training from brigade to divisional level during the training of captains and commanders.

Finally, a special 7-week course is set up for future battalion and regimental commanders.

Relevance of command, confidence in the actions carried out by and with subordinates: these would be the key words. The achievement of the objectives set would be based on a consensus of all parties, valuing the principle of "old-style" exemplarity.

**For several decades, and despite combat actions of sometimes extreme violence, the air-land combat leader has been mainly involved in stabilization and normalization missions. As the environment becomes increasingly conflictual, the assertion of high intensity would confront the tactical commander with human, material and informational chaos over a long period and over a wide spectrum.**

**Therefore, there is a need to reflect on the future shape of doctrine, means and operational readiness for the future. The leader's skills and image should be rethought and his or her training adapted accordingly, to enable him or her to defeat the enemy at high intensity. The "increased intelligence" of the tactical commander and the sharing of the flow of information, in open dialogue with the staff, are undoubtedly two avenues to be explored.**

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<sup>1)</sup> Since then, the CEMAT has, as we have seen previously, given a clearer definition of high inte

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