



"To get victory, you must want the battle."

General Tactical Review - Fire 2/2

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Tactique générale

To defeat an enemy, you must accept confrontation on all terrains. Immaterial actions weaken minds (psychic warfare), neutralize command systems (war in the electromagnetic spectrum) or blind them. But in any case, the opposing soldier must put down his weapons. He will therefore have to be physically restrained; this remains the priority of military action.

The nature of the chef

The leader is not the best boxer in the ring, even if he should be able to get into it for the value of the example. The leader is the one who makes the right decision in time; this implies as much courage as discernment. He is present at the right time and place and with the right people to advise him.⁹

If we take into account all the modern areas of conflictuality, war becomes increasingly complex. More factors interact as a result of the will of the adversary, blending with the classic uncertainty of the battlefield. The word complex, etymologically "woven together", has a strong meaning. It suggests the difficulty of clearly distinguishing the weft of an action and thus of identifying the threads that must be pulled to make or unmake it. The leader is faced with a new problem; he can proceed by analogy based on his experience, he can rely on his staff's studies, but complexity (because of the possible combinations) makes everything new. The scheme does not work because it does not exist for a given situation. Therefore, without prejudging the functioning of the staff, a systemic mind, agile in crossing the maximum number of interactions between them, becomes an asset for a leader. The definition of "what is it", which goes to the essence of the operational problem to be solved, takes on added importance. The leader needs to identify the thread that structures the backdrop.

There is no recipe. The very definition of a systemic leader is difficult to define. It is an intellectual attitude that consists in accepting to take an operational situation as something totally new and unprecedented, to discern which intelligences are hidden in its bowels, without seeking to compare it to something already known. Obviously, similarities will emerge, especially if the situation under consideration is one of continuity and duration. This amounts to resisting the immediate temptation to compare in order to favour the attitude of distinguishing one's own dynamics. The fact of working on scenarios already known for the exercises does not incline to this intellectual attitude. Even if they are modified from one time to the next, the temptation is to measure what has been modified rather than to think fundamentally. Changing them often, even taken in a single bank, avoids the temptation to become too strong because, in any case, it remains essential to reappropriate the scenario that has been retained.

Even if no recipe is relevant, the systemic intellectual attitude can be usefully contained in the following triptych: looking wider, looking further, appreciating the risk in order to mitigate it.¹⁰

Staff work

A staff is a formidable and living tool. Like any living being, it has its "internal life", invisible to an uninformed observer. Its plasticity and its very wide range of skills are naturally a source of self-management and self-animation; it easily loses sight of its collective purpose and secretes other more individual ones, those of the experts. Far from fearing it, the command group seeks to channel them.

The staff is in a quasi-permanent staff learning process. The different cells propose innovations, adaptations of procedures, new tools, software... A staff learns and adapts. A staff learns and adapts. It is also necessary to let it do so and not want to lock it into a predefined model once and for all.

Staff organizations always seem to be complex, compared with a bit of evil-mindedness at a gasworks. Let's admit that the presentation of an architecture of 1,300 people, with many connections between layers, to order 20,000 to 60,000 in the field, questions the common sense and realism of one who does not know it.

How can a corps or division commander be sure that he has an influence on the action? A chief is guided by his staff or directs a decision upstream. In any case, he decides in the last resort. The English word "Endorse", which corresponds to the functioning of the one who lets himself be guided, illustrates the idea well. The chief positions himself in relation to elements provided to him by the staff. He brings in his own ideas but is dependent on the material provided to him. The procedures and methods for developing orders, which are precise and comprehensive, ensure objectivity. The chief must judge their relevance and endorse them or not: "Endorse". Another option is initial guidance. The chief works with his small group of advisers alongside the staff and regularly recalculates with them. At meetings, he or she provides a renewed work orientation. Formal debriefings no longer serve to make him decide, but to allow the greatest number to take ownership of the plan or orders. Let's not postulate which attitude is the best, the two cohabit and depend on the personality of the leaders. Let us note that the superiority of execution rests on one of

the two postures assumed. The leader must not act by default.

The battle of the flows?

A staff conducts different battles within the main battle. That of physical and immaterial flows deserves sustained attention, it conditions success. Flows are to be generated, "digested", maintained. The management of flows too often refers to the single idea of "big data" and therefore to intelligence needs. By distinguishing material flows from data flows, we will better identify all the actions to be carried out. In the field of intelligence, it is more important to generate flows than to manage them.

As soon as combat action is launched, in terms of the intensity of the fighting, material flows will become particularly high. Logistics specialists master this complexity without, however, having been confronted with it in the reality of a war against a major enemy. Consumption of all types of supplies (not only ammunition), the management of the wounded from their evacuation to their care and all other major actions will put the logistics chain under strain. Without going into the logistics maneuver itself, let us retain two considerations of maneuver taking on a unique dimension: maintaining freedom of movement, command of the rear area. One depends on battle area management and the planning capabilities of the staff (multidisciplinary team) to react to disruptions, the other is a command decision as soon as the plan is drawn up. Indeed, the rear area cannot be considered only from a logistical point of view. The tactical situation will determine whether it remains under the responsibility of the first echelon divisions or whether it becomes an area of responsibility in its own right, entrusted to a division that will control it.

Data flow management is often seen from an intelligence perspective. It is true that in the planning phase of an operation, databases are provided and enriched. It begins with the Comprehensive Preparation of the Operational Environment (CPOE), the main aim of which is to have the most accurate and comprehensive view possible of the operational environment (not only from a military point of view). However, the main challenge for a corps lies in the enrichment of the base. The main challenge for the corps is not so much managing the bases as generating flows. The manoeuvring of sensors, as well as their number and performance, is just as important, if not more so, than the management of information flows.

High technology opens up many new avenues but will never replace manoeuvring. All sensors or technical effectors meet technical standards which are as many limitations of use. It is impossible, today, to permanently monitor an entire area of action, to be absolutely certain of the opposing maneuver. It would be as pointless as thinking that the contingency would be eliminated. Therefore, technical limitations as well as the scarcity of certain effectors make it necessary to plan their use and to accept deadlocks. The whole art consists in identifying the "best shots".

Making the enemy a "free negation"?

For Jean Guitton the enemy is assimilated to the "free negation" of the dialectical method. He is the antithesis of our action. He has a will of his own, objectives to which he puts his strength and energy. On the face of it, this conception is consistent with our analysis of the enemy. In reality we have difficulty in embodying it. We know our counter-insurgency adversary well. He has a history that reveals some keys to understanding him and eventually be ahead of him. The generic enemy in our exercises does not have a historical depth. He is reinventing himself and the first brick in this approach is to list his capabilities, leading us from the outset in a logic of means.

We work with real data that gives relevance to the reasoning and a certain validity to the modes of action. Calculating the balance of power is an essential step in military reasoning. It is science. The art consists rather in slipping into the intelligence of the enemy to make a true "free negation" of it. Concretely, no enemy mode of action, even for an exercise and perhaps even more so for an exercise, should be theoretical (applicable everywhere) like the enemy general to conceive the maneuver even if a G2 officer theoretically occupies this position during an exercise. It ensures more consistency of actions than the pursuit of objectives that correspond to a plan that our action thwarts.

In a staff, one hundred people work on our manoeuvre and at best two or three on the enemy's. The G2 officer is the one who is in charge of the manoeuvre. The organisation of the intelligence chain, the manoeuvring of sensors, the exploitation of intelligence occupy the world and require energy. Despite all the qualities and skills of a level 1 or 2 intelligence division, the technical aspect and the intrinsic quality of the products too often outweigh the "intelligence of the enemy". During the planning phase, the deputy general of a corps could usefully play the role of the opposing leader.

The quality of intelligence requests depends on the visibility we have of the enemy's intent. It must be confirmed or disproved and we must look for flaws in the manoeuvre.

What's the relationship between kinetic and non-kinetic actions?

Today many aggressive actions take place in a cyber and immaterial spectrum pushing the limits between the acceptable and the unacceptable. The so-called 5D domain is becoming more and more important to the point of becoming a separate subject, distinct from classical, kinetic warfare.

"The technique of warfare, which involves threatening bodies with mortal blows, is composed with a technique of revolution or revolt, which involves influencing minds to change mentalities and conversions. Here, fear has as its object victory. Here, subversion having as its object conversion. »¹¹

Psychic warfare undermines individual morale, the cohesion of a nation, the legitimacy of political decision-makers. The social body is weakened and easier to manipulate and impress. It inoculates fear, which is not overcome, the fear that generates gratuitous violence or guilty inhibitions (not reacting when it should be like rescuing someone). The immaterial war is a psychic war that he would be guilty of neglecting. It is not a new fact.

However, the means of doing so are improving and becoming more complex, with the particular characteristic of being able to hide under relative anonymity, even in times of peace. Psychic warfare is not a substitute for physical warfare, both complement each other without prejudging a priori the pre-eminence of one over the other.

3.To summarize in a few words the preceding remarks

Level 1 and 2 staffs win the duel of intelligence as they read inside the opposing system, get ahead of it, reduce contingency. The other levels win the physical duel insofar as they receive a mission consistent with what they are really good at, and the conditions for their success have been understood and shaped by their leader. If we take up the boxer metaphor: levels 1 and 2 organize the fight between two boxers of the same category, sometimes avoid it, influence the jury and the public, and get all the benefits of the event. The brigades provide the boxers who go into the ring with¹².

"Command and Control" for fighting an enemy on the same footing in a ground combat covers the following aspects:

- Understanding the principles of subsidiarity and substitution that go hand in hand. Everyone in the place for which they are equipped, organized, trained, all placed in time and space.
- The level of synthesis, exercised ipso facto by the highest level of command deployed on the ground, ensures the coherence of all actions. It is the designer and the subordinates act as "effectors".
- High technology is an undeniable asset to protect oneself and to optimise command systems. It is not a substitute for planning. One cannot hope to solve by high technology what must be solved by manoeuvre.
- Taking or keeping the initiative is at the heart of the tactical problem.
- The battle of the flows is the key to success.
- A staff is a living being, effective when it remains focused on the common goal.
- To win, one must agree to enter the ring. Intangible fields, the Narrative Battle, are essential assets but never a second chance.

⁹ The warrior tradition that the leader is always in front deserves to be put into perspective. The current complexity of operations calls for stability, the ability to step back and the introduction of the right orientation at the right time. Physical presence is required where the spirit blows.

¹⁰ This corresponds in English to the acronym AIM (the goal): Look forward/Anticipate - Look wider/Integrate - Risk assessment/Mitigate.

11 Jean Guilton, Thought and War, op. cit., preface .

12 It would be interesting to analyse boxing fights to identify the conditions for victory. Both boxers have the same type of training, the same experience, the same techniques and the same courage. What are the factors that make the difference?

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