Let's limit the limitations
Free Reflection

Colonel Christophe de LAJUDIE

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Commandement

The provisional version of the MEDO published by the CDEF under the name MEDO-T mentions, instead of constraints, "limitations", "constraints" and "restrictions", innovations that have triggered intense cogitation in the microcosm of trainers (and what about that of trainees?).) One gets lost in conjectures about the causes and consequences of these changes in terms, some not hesitating to see it as a change in method.

In reality, however, there is no change of any kind, the CICDE having just, through a strange mental distortion, brutally decreed that the birth of the new generation of the world's population is not the end of the world.The CICDE has just, through a strange mental distortion, brutally decreed that the necessary interoperability was to be achieved by adopting French homonyms for the terms used in English, even if it meant trying to erase centuries of use with the stroke of a pen.

Until now, French methods of reasoning had only known constraints, the meaning of which had been altered by recent usage. The decision of the CICDE, endorsed by the CDEF in the name of a sacrosanct "interoperability", opens up an abyss of questions: Will it be necessary from now on to systematically replace the French terms in use by their English equivalent in order to be "interoperable"? Are synonyms really synonymous? And to stick to the MEDO and its intellectual logic: what new meanings do the terms adopted bring to the method? Is it a methodological alteration or only a change of terms without any consequences?

For at least two generations, French military usage has used the word "constraints" to express any limits imposed by a leader on the freedom of action he conceded to his subordinates. In common usage, the term has a somewhat broader meaning because, while Larousse defines it as a necessity to which one subjects someone or an act whose

purpose is to force a person to to do something, Robert also sees it more generally as an impediment to freedom of action, whether that impediment results from a will or from a factual situation.

This general meaning had moreover come to prevail in the ATT 106 and the MEDO 2009, which defined constraints as "prescriptions or objective data of any kind imposed and constituting an obstacle to the freedom of action of the head, leading to measures to be taken."The notion of "data of any kind" which was not said by whom it was imposed - by the chief? or by the environment? - The notion of "data of any kind" which was not said to be imposed by whom - by the chief? or by the environment? had ended up extending to any seemingly insurmountable difficulty, effectively erasing the notion of prescription. The definition in ATT 106 is flawed and introduces a bias, not in relation to common usage, but in relation to the logic of the method, which studies "objective data of all kinds" with the factors of time, terrain, friendly and enemy forces, and considers in principle that nothing is ever impossible and that only directives can absolutely prohibit certain actions. In the particular context of decision-making processes, constraint would therefore be more appropriately defined as a "prescription constituting an imperative impediment to freedom of action. »

These are not purely theoretical semantic nuances: When a treaty maker calls "constraint" the fact that the crossing of a river will be extremely difficult, he wants to express the opinion that the crossing is practically impossible - an opinion that is always seriously excessive - whereas he expresses the idea that it is somehow legally prohibited. However, no crossing is really impossible and, if a planned manoeuvre requires it to be carried out, the question for this writer will be to say what conditions and means will be necessary and thus to propose choices to the chief. **Baptizing such data as constrained is therefore a serious methodological error and not a vague semantic imprecision.**

It so happens that English and American military usage calls these constraints "limitations" and believes it is useful to distinguish between positive constraints or obligations which it calls "constraints" and negative constraints or prohibitions which it calls "restraints".**(1)**.

This usage does not change the meaning of the terms. Limitations " result in theory from prescriptions of the superior, as in our case they have an imperative character, as in our case they are found in the orders received and are studied as facts from which conclusions can be drawn. And as in our case, but no more than in ours, the level of methodological mastery of the mass of those involved, combined with the fatigue of exercises or campaigns, organizational disorders, and pedagogical approximations....**(2)** leads to dangerous methodological errors that can lead to totally erroneous conclusions.

The terms adopted by the CICDE are not at fault in themselves. They are unquestionably French terms and a reading of the dictionary indicates that their meaning is close to the word contrainte. Constraint and restriction both derive from the Latin root -stringere (3), to squeeze' and "limitation" is defined as the action of imposing limits, with "restriction" as a synonym. »

It could therefore be considered that the CICDE's decision has no serious consequences, except that it contradicts a longstanding common usage, that is, that it is not a serious matter.It creates a confusion that could further reduce the effectiveness of the staffs, even though this change does not bring any new benefits. It

cannot be seriously argued that homonymy would improve mutual understanding among the Allies. Every mind is capable of conceiving that the English say in one way what the French say otherwise. The novelty which it is claimed to introduce here is of no interest and creates unnecessary disorder. It must therefore be rejected on the grounds that what does not yield anything is always too expensive. That is why the Staff College has decided for the time being to stick to the usage and keep the word "constraint" in its former job.

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(1) **The doctrinal documents, plans and orders therefore refer indifferently to "limitations " in general or more precisely to "constraints and restraints", which amounts to** precisely the same **thing.**

(2) **All US** staff officers **have learned that** constraints **are "must** do **" and restraints** are " **must not do". But the vague meaning of the verb "must" ,** **which means either that one has a duty to do it or that it is in one's interest to do it, leads to a total confusion between constraints and imperatives, a confusion that is evident in the French MS as well.**

(3) **Which gives** restringere, astringere, constringere, **all of which have the meaning of tightening in one way or another.A special mention for constringere** from which **derives "constraint" but also "constrictor": how better to express the fact that imposing constraints ends up suffocating or "incapacitating" the subordinate?**

Title :	Colonel Christophe de LAJUDIE
Author (s) :	Colonel Christophe de LAJUDIE
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