



ADAPTING ITS COMMAND TO THE CONDITIONS OF THE ENGAGEMENT AND ITS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES; AND

Command in Operations Exercise for Tactical Leaders

RFT 3.2 Tome 2 (FT-05)

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THE CONTINUUM OF OPERATIONS INVOLVES CHANGING CONDITIONS OF COMMAND.

Today's operational commitments are very broadly characterised by three main phases within the same continuum: intervention, stabilisation and standardisation. Each of these phases involves, in varying proportions, situations or peaks of violence that can go as far as characterized acts of war, simultaneously with calmer or even stable situations. However, the transition from one phase to another is difficult to perceive and transition phases can last: the tactical commander's understanding of situations is therefore an essential quality.

The initial phase of intervention is the one in which command is most often based on combat military aspects. This phase, which involves both conventional and non-conventional armed forces, must be planned in the light of the stabilisation and normalisation phases that follow. This may involve conflicting considerations for the planner.

The stabilization phase, on the other hand, crystallizes the major difficulties, as it is characterized, for the leader, by the piling up of often antagonistic constraints. It is eminently more complex, and much more difficult to grasp for the leader, who is only one of the many actors present in the theatre of operations.

- The ideological, even religious nature of conflicts, for which Western mentalities are little or unprepared, requires an in-depth reflection **on ways of thinking and cultural references that are different from our own.**
- The success of this phase, which is necessarily a long-term one, rests on the continuity and **permanence of action, which is always difficult to re-establish.** The success of this phase, which is necessarily long-term, depends on the continuity and permanence of action, which is always difficult to achieve because of the permanent rotation of chiefs and units, inherent in the operational cycles in force in all Western armies. In this context, it is essential to keep in

mind the purpose of the **operation, i.e. the desired end state** . For the military commander, this requires a considerable intellectual effort to integrate into his reasoning the fact that his local action, lasting a few months, aims to make a fine contribution to the achievement of a strategic objective whose horizon is most often measured in years.

- In stabilization, the control of the environment requires on the ground a permanent deployment of large numbers of personnel, whereas the reduced size of Western armies no longer makes it possible to obtain the omnipresence of a force in a theatre. This situation therefore leads the military leader to combine the most cost-effective modes of action and procedures, or even to be forced to take calculated risks.
- This new form of warfare among populations, often in urban areas, fundamentally changes the situation in terms of the choice of modes of action, and therefore the exercise of command.

In the context of a return to normal life (**normalisation** phase), the place of the armed forces is no longer paramount and the military leader usually acts only in support of other actors for whose benefit he may be called upon to provide all or part of the means at his disposal, particularly those of command. He must always show situational awareness, i.e. rethink his action in relation to the determining actors.

The role and position of the commander in an operation evolves according to the phase of the operation in question; as the operation develops, the commander's freedom of action diminishes, while at the same time external constraints increase. From being a major player, he or she becomes a player in support of other players, whether civilian or local. However, whatever the phase, the foundations of command remain, in particular the necessary adaptation of the military leader to the context in which he acts and gives meaning.

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