



Tactical modes of land forces

GENERAL TACTICS, Perennial Principles of Warfare... New Processes

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Histoire & stratégie

The operative framework.

The military strategy options defined in Part I determine the general way of operating in a theatre in order to achieve the political objectives set.

Based on these options, operations conducted by land forces in a theatre combine several tactical modes. They aim to achieve either a decision through the destruction of the opposing forces or the resolution of a crisis situation through security, control or even assistance to the parties involved.

Land forces organise their operations around four tactical modes characterising a type of action according to the nature of the effects to be produced on the adversary or the environment:

- offensive, - defensive, - securing, - assistance.

Tactical modes of land forces

Tactical modes are available in :

- Generic Modes of Action (MAGs) which are dominant ways of acting that allow to choose the necessary means and to combine their abilities in order to achieve an effect on the enemy or the environment;
- missions, which are the clear and concise expression of the action to be accomplished and the goal pursued.

Generic modes of action and missions²⁴ are not, however, exclusively attached to each tactical mode. They are the tools that allow the tactical leader to express a manoeuvre idea that effectively adapts to the adversary and the environment.

The offensive

In combat, success is achieved through offensive action. Even in defence, every opportunity must be taken to take the initiative and go on the offensive.

Offense is part of a general dynamic of forward movement whose goals are mainly the destruction or collapse of the opposing forces and the seizure of key points on the ground. It intervenes essentially in the intervention phase during a limited conflict against a symmetrical or asymmetrical opponent.

In order to ensure the success factors of "gaining the upper hand" and "producing the effects", an offensive manoeuvre can be carried out in the following stages:

PREPARATION / TAKING THE ASCENDANCY

The purpose of taking control of the opponent is to prevent him from taking any initiative. In this preparatory phase for action, various methods can be used: conducting a deception maneuver, anticipating and disorganizing the enemy; they can stop and then restrict his freedom of action. It is then a question of :

- disorganising its intelligence and target acquisition capabilities, its command capabilities, both physical (communications systems) and immaterial (capabilities judgement and will of leaders), its defence capabilities, its lines of communication that link the echelons of combat to their logistical support and link the echelons of combat to each other.

This disorganisation is achieved through actions in depth: artillery, ALAT or air force fire, electronic support, special operations and deception manoeuvres.

- Fix and partition or isolate the contact rungs by fire and natural or artificial obstacles. Awareness by the enemy of his loss of freedom of action also makes it possible to "fix" him morally.

In this phase, when it is a question of constraining a symmetrical or asymmetrical enemy, a ratio of force of 1.5 to 1 is generally sufficient.

EFFORT

After having met all the conditions to limit the freedom of action and to increase the doubt in the adversary, it is a question of concretizing the action of destruction or conquest.

For this, speed and shock are decisive. The manoeuvre is carried out on the weak points created or detected during the previous stage. It is based on surprise, the ability to seize an opportunity and, depending on the circumstances, on brutality or flexibility in order to weaken the enemy to facilitate his destruction and destroy his will.

The offensive movement is conceived in the following two ways:

- The overrun - by envelopment or circumvention - aims to reach the main

objective²⁵ with a significant volume of forces after having fixed the enemy charged with protecting this objective and overrun his device. Circumvention differs from envelopment in that it is designed to overrun the immediate enemy and reach the rear echelon directly. The ascendancy over the enemy is maintained by the diversion achieved. This is the movement to be favoured.

- Penetration is the alternative which has for goal the destruction or the seizure of an objective after the frontal crossing of the adverse device. The main action consists in piercing the enemy device to reach the objective while covering oneself in front of an adverse reaction. The action is carried out in two successive stages.

Success is based on maintaining the pace of the action by the simultaneity of actions and the ability to coordinate them in particular through the provision of support.

The shock combines with this movement to annihilate the opponent's will.

It generally results in physical destruction. The extension of this in depth is either gradual or in the form of a raid or pursuit.

CONSOLIDATION

The consolidation phase that follows the actual offensive action is the one that transforms local victory into decisive victory; it takes the form of breakthrough, exploitation or pursuit. The breakthrough is very resource-intensive and may call into question the exploitation that consists in maintaining freedom of action over the opponent's rear. Pursuit, on the other hand, must prevent the enemy from reorganizing.

Faced with a symmetrical or asymmetrical enemy, the overall balance of power to be preserved is 3 to 1.

The offensive in urban areas

In order to avoid bogging down and wear and tear, offensive actions in urban areas must be targeted. Modes of action will be adapted to this. They are generally part of a movement aimed at precise objectives during a maneuver of encirclement or isolation. In most cases, they require lengthy preparation (particularly in the field of intelligence), the acquisition of a very favourable balance of forces (up to 10 to 1) and the adaptation of logistical support. Disappointment manoeuvres and the night-time conquest of an urban bridgehead should therefore be favoured.

- The ascendancy over the opponent is of a particular nature. The acquisition of intelligence is more difficult in urban areas than in open terrain, where human sensors also play a predominant role. Depending on the city's layout, additional means (ROEM-GE, ROIM²⁷, etc.) will be used. The disorganisation of the adversary by suppressing all freedom of action is, for its part, much more difficult to achieve.

The presence or absence of the population and its attitude are a determining factor to be taken into account.

Preparation requires meticulousness and rigorous organisation. It is supplemented by

operations to disappoint and compartmentalise the adversary in order to prevent any reinforcement, withdrawal or possibility of manoeuvre.

- The effort phase takes the form of one or more powerful actions carried out simultaneously and in a permanent joint framework, according to two main principles that emerge from recent operations:

- The first is based on large-scale attacks consisting of a methodical cleaning of the city, quarter by quarter, by the landed infantry.

- The second is based on the progressive control of the main accesses to the city, followed by armoured raids on targeted targets.

- Consolidation consists of conquering the city to ensure its long-term control through security actions.

Defense

- Defense generally contributes to the resumption of the offensive without loss of initiative either in the preliminary phase or to face an adverse surprise. Moreover, this tactical mode is not necessarily retrograde; offensive modes of action can serve a defensive purpose. The latter requires indeed to break the coherence of the enemy device to develop conditions favorable to the offensive or save its forces locally in order to make an effort on another point.

The defensive action comprises two stages: the valorization and the weakening intended to take the ascendancy on the adversary then the stop which concretizes the effects to be produced before being able to exploit them.

PREPARATION / TAKING THE ASCENDANCY

In the case of defence, the advantage is exerted on the opponent himself, but also by making adjustments to the terrain in order to exploit the advantage of being first in the zone of engagement.

The procedures implemented are as follows:

- Deploying in depth a sensor system that provides information on the opponent and defines privileged zones of harassment;
- Enhance the terrain by relying on a network of obstacles in order to disorganise the adversary while protecting and camouflaging the friendly device;
- weaken the adversary and deprive him of his freedom of action by dissociating him through combined actions of destruction throughout the depth of the device, while reducing his cohesion and intelligence capacities (deception procedures).

EFFORT

Using the depth of the device to thwart the enemy's attack breaks the enemy's rhythm and regains the initiative. Taking advantage of the local supremacy obtained, it is then a question of stopping the opponent by exploiting the control of the terrain.

This action is based on the shock then on the movement to create surprise and acquire a favorable local balance of power. It concludes with the exploitation phase intended to relaunch the offensive.

The aim of the shock is to stop the enemy in order to encourage the initiative to take off. Depending on the goal, the neutralisation of the enemy or the defence of an area, the modalities of implementation may vary. However, regardless of the method chosen, friendly forces must be able to deliver powerful and concentrated fire both in depth and during ambushes or openings during a counter-attack.

- In the case of neutralizing the enemy, the defensive action must shape the enemy to expose him to favorable terrain in the final phase of effect production. The emphasis is on defeating the enemy rather than preserving or regaining ground. Defense then combines actions of attrition supported by fire and obstacles.
- Area defence, where the complete destruction of the enemy is not sought, combines the use of mobile reserves and defensive positions. It is based on the preservation of the terrain by absorbing the enemy into a series of intersecting positions from which he can be largely destroyed by fire. It combines interdiction and harassment actions.

The movement following the stopping of the enemy is based on an overrun or counter-attack led by an identified reserve.

The defensive force must have an overall mobility greater than or equal to that of the enemy.

- Neutralization of the enemy requires the forward deployment of relatively small forces and the ability to form a large reserve that will lead the decisive counterattack on advantageous space.
- In an area defence, the bulk of the defensive force is deployed in order to conserve ground. This process emphasizes the mobility of units throughout the area in order to intercept the opponent with reduced reserved elements. In all cases, the reserve exploits all the technical means at its disposal to strike in the right place and at the right time.

CONSOLIDATION

In principle, the defensive phase is usually transitory. A planned offensive exploitation must in fact take advantage of the reversal of initiative obtained. It is based on the defender's residual capacity to be able to restart his action thanks to forces that he will have put in reserve and preserved for this decisive stage of the overall action.

Depending on the general way of operating resulting from the strategic military options (i.e. obtaining the decision or resolving a crisis situation), land forces conduct operations according to a combination of the four tactical modes: offensive, defensive, securing and assistance.

- In offensive mode, ascendancy is achieved after disorganising and fixing the adversary. Its destruction or the seizure of the ground is then obtained by an overrun movement that prepares the action on the objective. Action in urban

areas requires careful preparation and a more favourable balance of forces than in open areas.

- The defensive mode, is a necessary step to restore the ascendancy over the enemy. The new operational context favours defensive modes of action that prioritise the preservation of the terrain over the strict destruction of the adversary. The regaining of ascendancy is based on intelligence, on actions that enhance the environment and weaken the enemy. After a phase of stopping the enemy, the effects obtained must be exploited to assert the supremacy acquired.

- The aim of securing is to create a safe environment. The domination of the environment and the control of the terrestrial space are acquired by the influence, the control and the maintenance of an intervention capacity.

The eradication of an armed rebellion will only be achieved after limiting its freedom of manoeuvre and then maintaining dissuasive pressure on its zones of refuge.

- Assistance consists of helping the population through relief, information and reorganisation of the state and infrastructure.

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