



A new use of force

Winning the Battle Leading to Peace – Land Forces in Conflicts Today and Tomorrow

extrait du FT-01

Published on 01/12/2018

Histoire & stratégie

By changing its purpose, the use of force adapts to the changing nature of international relations. Since it no longer conquers but works in the service of law and peace, force acts at the very heart of life: human society. Always necessary whenever an army has to fight a battle, the defeat of the enemy is no longer sufficient for the success of the engagement and is no longer the main objective of the use of force. The objective is therefore no longer so much to destroy the adversary as to act on his will and force him not to use, or no longer to use, the force at his disposal. The "court of force" has been replaced by the following

the "confrontation of wills" has been replaced by "the confrontation of wills". Even more than in the past, the use of force cannot be an end in itself, but must at all times remain closely subordinate to strategic objectives.

L'TANGLE OF SHARES

Engaged in a theatre of operations, the armed forces are faced with a tangle of actions. Despite partial overlap, the succession of phases (intervention - stabilisation - normalisation) makes it possible to identify the main aspects of each phase: use of force, security, support for the population, public services, restoration of law, etc. All these phases require units with multiple qualities, volumes of forces, different structures and training, and a variety of equipment. However, at any point in a phase, the forces are also confronted with diverse actions and multiple tasks, which requires them to be flexible and reversible. Here, one unit must use all available options of force or face indiscriminate violence, while there, sometimes in the same area, another must assist a wounded population or train and coach indigenous forces ready to take over.

Moreover, even more than yesterday, the adversary that sometimes has to be fought is the partner of tomorrow that must be involved in the resolution of the conflict: it is in the village that is secured by force that normal living conditions must be restored tomorrow,

the market must be recreated and children must be sent to school. The versatile crowd that welcomes or opposes is ready with a sign, an image, an instruction to change sides. Field diplomacy and military action combine and are two of the faces of the soldier in the field.

In the same theatre, the tangle of **actions (supporting the population** , fighting, helping public services...) is the daily life of soldiers who see their **job take on new dimensions**.

DOMINE THE CITY AND CONTROL THE SPACES

In the countryside, armies have often had to choose between defeating the enemy forces or conquering the centre of power: the city. In most cases, they preferred the former, venturing into the latter only if the mission required it. Being able to deploy there and act with fewer constraints, they have favoured open spaces rather than the compartmentalization of cities; they have equipped, structured and trained themselves for this. Since the armed forces now act mainly in a human environment that is increasingly concentrated in urban areas, the city supplants the countryside as their main area of action. As a stakes and theatre of conflict, it has become the field and the names of recent battles are essentially city names: Sarajevo, Grozny, Beirut, Baghdad, Mitrovica, Basra, Abidjan, Kabul, Bint Jbeil...

But the city is expensive to take, to hold, to master. But the city is expensive to take, to hold, to control. It encloses the fighter in a closed space and forces him to act differently than in open areas. Concentrating violence, it focuses attention. A privileged battlefield of asymmetrical warfare, the city is thus one of the last maquis where determined guerrillas can hope to defeat or resist a modern army. They find there a favourable ground and numerous supports. Attacks, ambushes, sniping, infiltration, disinformation or crowd movement are the weapons they use and against which they have to fight and preserve themselves.

Moreover, regions with difficult access remain areas of action that are sometimes essential and, like the urban area, a privileged environment for asymmetrical combat. Mountains, forests, desert or swampy areas remain the bastions of determined enemies who train there, rebuild their forces and control the multiple traffics that develop in grey areas, sometimes straddling several borders. The armed forces must know how to fight there and force a fleeting adversary, adapted to the terrain, to deny him his freedom of action and prevent him from taking the initiative.

At the same time, however, armies engage over increasingly large areas and defeat a campaign that may appear limitless. Often focused on military objectives in the intervention phase, they must then extend their action to a considerable extent. Present in the cities, marking out efforts in certain areas, they must ensure a minimum control of the vast expanses that link them. In contact with scattered populations, moving on the ground or in the air, shifting efforts and units, armies must have the means of essential freedom of action.

Forced to control areas of increasing size and to act in areas that are difficult to access, military forces nevertheless concentrate their action **in cities**. These are the privileged battlefield of asymmetrical warfare and one of the last scrublands where determined guerrillas can hope to defeat or resist a modern army.

LEOPLE AT THE HEART OF MILITARY CONCERNS

Adversary or ally, sometimes successively one or the other, the population affected by a conflict is now an actor in its own right as well as a stake in the confrontations. It is an objective to be influenced and whose reactions will contribute to the final outcome.

There is no conflict in which the civilian population is not at the centre of the military concerns of the parties involved. Thus, moving from a world where the civilian population was the "rear" - as opposed to the front, which is essentially a military zone - the armed forces now act within it and with reference to it. Military forces have entered the war zone within the **populations**.

And since what is at stake is human society, its governance, its social contract, its institutions, and no longer this or that province, river or border, there is no longer a line or terrain to conquer or protect. The front is multifaceted and widespread throughout the theatre of operations. To be effective, the use of forces cannot be dissociated from the expectations of populations plunged into disorder, chaos or arbitrariness. The victims of a conflict always expect protection, security and order first, but they also expect a form of respect and freedom.

These essential requirements, which cannot be avoided or fail, impose severe constraints on the use of force and influence the objectives. They also have a strong ethical dimension in conflicts where part of the outcome is a psychological confrontation.

By becoming an essential actor and a stake in the conflict, the population becomes a central concern of the military forces. They have entered the time of **war among populations who** aspire to order, security and respect.

UN LAND-BASED USE OF FORCE

Since the use of force is essentially applied in the field of human societies, its main field of application, similar to that of the past, is in the terrestrial environment, where crises are created and resolved. Indeed, while military forces use and exploit all the material and immaterial environments in which they act or have taken action, it is on the ground, physically, in contact with the other protagonists, through a lasting presence, that the action undertaken bears fruit. It is on the ground that the decisive action for achieving the strategic effect is carried out.

On the ground, the use of forces in contact with the population requires the control of the environment which forms the link between the military success (the tactical KO) of the intervention phase and the normalisation phase, the exploitation of the strategic success. The form that this control of the environment takes must be adapted to the evolution of the situation and to the intermediate objectives defined.

Environmental control on the ground and over time thus forms the core and essence of the stabilisation phase. It allows the transition from the military objective to the political goal. And this passage is long, necessarily long. The "real time" of short loop actions favoured during the intervention phase gives way to the "useful time" of in-depth actions. It involves forces capable of sustaining, recovering and adapting to changing circumstances. The stabilization phase therefore requires qualified personnel.

The theatres of operations are often far away, mainly on land. In a framework that is always joint, forces must be deployed, projected from a distance, maintained and

supported. Logistical support capability is one of the essential elements of a force's success. Increasing in complexity and weight, this capability must allow for the intervention phase, i.e. emergency projection, at least for a fraction of the forces, the strength of the means and the ability to sustain the battle. It is also the guarantee of sustainable deployments, sometimes over years, following tactical success.

In July 1993, BATINF 4 was formed to participate in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the defence of the Bosnian enclaves encircled by Bosnian Serb forces. Planned at very short notice, the battalion is deployed in a particularly sensitive sector: Skanderja. Located in the firing axis of the Gorbavica district, where many Bosnian-Serb snipers are rampaging, this sports complex is in the heart of an area dominated by the most independent of the Bosnian militias defending the city. On arrival, the advance party lost one man, seriously wounded in an ambush. From that moment on, a soldier of the battalion falls under the blows of one another every three or four days.

The battalion commander decided to regain his freedom of action by acting along two lines: attacking the aggressors and attaching the population. In accordance with the rules of engagement, any attack is met with an immediate and proportionate response. The effectiveness of these actions is based on a permanent anti-snipers mechanism and the confidence placed in the use of force for self-defence.

At the same time, a sector of responsibility is entrusted to each elementary unit with the mission of "making France loved". The sections and platoons multiply contacts and aid projects for the population.

After a few months, this double policy of an iron fist and a velvet glove finally bore fruit. Attacks are considerably reduced. Losses became nil and the battalion gained its freedom of action and the confidence of the surrounding environment.

The land environment, where crises are created and resolved, remains the main place of application of the armed force, whose use is manifested in the control of the environment. This is the essence of the stabilization phase and involves numerous forces capable of sustaining and recovering.

Title : extrait du FT-01

Author (s) : extrait du FT-01

Release date 27/11/2018
