



## Sense of responsibility

Command exercise

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### A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY... WHAT?

**Sense of responsibility defines the ability to make and take decisions and to assume them, in relation to the duties performed. It goes beyond the simple moral obligation to answer for one's actions. The ethics of responsibility involves the leader in the human, moral or other (material, financial, environmental) consequences that will result from the accomplishment of his mission and the actions he will carry out or order to be carried out in order to achieve it. The ethics of conviction alone cannot suffice for a military leader who must, by his or her choices, resolve the tension that may arise between the obligation to carry out his or her mission and personal convictions.**

In the exercise of command, the notion of the personal responsibility of the leader is engaged and clearly takes precedence over the notion of collective responsibility.

The sense of responsibility is also exercised at several levels:

- with regard to oneself: positioning, requirement of training and personal training;
- with regard to one's subordinates: duty of availability, protection, but also concern for subsidiarity in order to entrust each person with responsibilities in his or her own measure (because neglecting the responsibility of a subordinate is tantamount to destroying his or her authority);
- towards its leaders: duty of loyalty and transparency;
- with regard to its unity: loyalty to the collective ideal, since cohesion rests largely on the intertwining of responsibilities.

### **A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY ... WHY?**

- It engenders efficiency and leads to involvement in the mission and overcoming obstacles.
- It is essential to help subordinates to blossom by entrusting each person with responsibilities that are commensurate with his or her abilities.
- It is intimately linked to operational effectiveness and the level of risk the leader is willing to take to achieve it, i.e. the balance between boldness and prudence expected of the responsible leader.

### **NO SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY ... WITHOUT :**

- will: To be responsible is first of all to want to take responsibility for one's actions and accept to expose oneself;
- freedom of conscience: responsibility is an act in which the notion of free choice comes into play;
- capacity to situate oneself: the leader has (in advance and for the good of society) committed himself to behave in the sense required by his function and of which he must be fully aware. Knowing where he stands in the hierarchy around him (superiors and subordinates), he is aware of what is expected of him;
- acceptance of risk: in connection with the virtue of prudence;
- solidarity: the responsibility of the military leader commits his leaders, peers and subordinates, with whom he is in solidarity.

### **THE SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY ... IN THE TEXTS :**

"The leader is above all the one who takes charge of others, the burden of their hesitant or failing responsibilities. »

Emmanuel Mounier (philosopher) - Trait du caractère (1974).

"Some people hesitate when faced with difficult situations. He who has a taste for responsibility, after having thought about the problem, knows how to impose a solution and make it triumph. »

Marshal Joffre.

"To be a man is precisely to be responsible. It is to feel shame in the face of a misery that did not seem to depend on you. It is to be proud of a victory that the comrades have won. It is to feel, by laying your stone, that you are helping to build the world. »

Antoine de Saint Exupéry - Terre des hommes (1939).

### **A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY ... "IN CONTACT":**

Testimony of a Captain Staff Officer - Operation PAMIR - Afghanistan - 2011:

"For this exclusively American operation, no French support had been requested. Only a joint forces detachment in reinforced alert posture and an operational monitoring cell had

been activated on the French side. As head of the battle area, the French GTIA corps commander had given his approval for this operation, as well as the French Army's support for the operation. Even if he disapproved of an American mode of action that was assessed as too risky in terms of operational interest.

As the American unit began its withdrawal, an insurgent counter-attack forced them to break contact under heavy fire. A request for ground support arrives, but the description of the tactical situation is too confused, it is not possible to identify an effective manoeuvre. The ERTF operations centre refuses to engage us. Although I understood the reasons for this order, I knew that this refusal could be severely interpreted by our allies as a guilty defection. I then decided to take the responsibility of proposing another supporting manoeuvre, not - as I had hoped - to be carried out. I decided to take the responsibility of proposing another supporting manoeuvre, not - as the Americans wanted - by securing the main road, but by deploying observation and fire on the heights. The operations centre validates the manoeuvre. The Americans will join our FOB without suffering any casualties. In this episode, I think that everyone assumed their responsibilities. We had a moral responsibility to rescue our allies and brothers-in-arms, but we also had a responsibility not to risk the lives of our soldiers in a hazardous manner. The proposed manoeuvre enabled us to assume this dual responsibility. In hindsight, our allies will recognise the uncertainty of their action and will also better assume their share of responsibility by seeking better coordination of operations. »

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