



The study of Lyautey's methods in Morocco. What lessons for AMO in 2018? 4/4

General Military Review No. 54

les chefs de bataillon BURTIN, de LASTOURS et THELLIER

Published on 07/03/2019

Histoire & stratégie

"The ability to bring together the operational capacities of partners for greater synergy is essential for success. At the strategic level, it makes it possible to integrate land-based action into a global approach [...] while preparing the way out of the crisis. At the tactical level, it contributes to the achievement of the mass effects needed to achieve a favourable local balance of forces. "Future land action.

The AMO in the Army's "In Touch" engagements

The AMO appears today more than ever, as a truly essential capability of the Army units engaged in operations insofar as it is a real power tool adapted to small as well as large current and future wars.

A broad spectrum tool

First of all, the tendency - still alive - to reduce the ACA to a training mission with no direct operational purpose seems too restrictive: on the one hand, the beneficial effects of training necessarily take time before being felt, which often proves problematic when the political authority is eagerly awaiting visible results. On the other hand, it is particularly difficult for a mentor not only to properly assess the partner's capacities and needs, but also to build some form of credibility in his or her eyes without ever accompanying the partner in operations. This knowledge and credibility often prove to be essential to the effectiveness of the training, which could explain the fragility of the results of the EPIDOTE mission in Afghanistan or the EUTM mission in Mali.

Moreover, several recent operations have highlighted the value of missions that consist in temporarily bringing key capabilities to a partner without the intention of handing them over to it. For example, in 2016, Operation Odyssey Lightning, the takeover of Sirte by US-supported Libyan militias, may have resembled an AMO mission: It consisted in providing

air strike capabilities, including attack helicopters deployed on a nearby Landing Platform Dock, to a partner with singularly limited tactical expertise. Similarly, the indirect fire support provided to the Iraqi army by the Caesar guns of Task Force Wagram quickly established itself as a decisive capability whose tactical effects were quickly felt.

In fact, training and contact support appear to be two complementary components of an AMO mission aimed at operational effectiveness. Indeed, contact support not only allows for rapid and concrete tactical results and a better grasp of the specifics of the operational context, but also reinforces both the morale of the partner and the credibility of the mentors. On the other hand, training helps to develop contacts with the partner, ensure its reliability and lead it to a form of autonomy to the point of ultimately authorizing the disengagement of mentors with a view to their re-engagement in favour of other units. Therefore, ensuring that a balance between these two components is established ab initio and then adapted to the local tactical situation appears to be a truly central issue in any AMO mission.

Thus, as a strategic tool complementary to "military diplomacy", the AMO also offers real opportunities in the tactico-operational field, and moreover with a particularly interesting cost-effectiveness ratio.

A mission adapted to the whole of the FOT

Consideration of the capabilities that can be provided to the partner should not be limited to those held by the special forces units to which the contact support mission is often devolved.¹ Indeed, the violence of the recent clashes against Daech in Iraq and Syria has highlighted the interest in having - even in a sample manner - 'heavy' means at one's disposal: conventional, technologically very advanced and capable of offering protection and extension to mentors while presenting a real added value in the eyes of partners, often themselves equipped with armour. Moreover, advanced electronic warfare capabilities have rapidly established themselves as formidable "force multipliers" that are particularly prized by the partner and are currently being used to great effect in Iraq.

However, transposing AMO modes of action from special forces to conventional units as they stand can be risky: For example, the possibility of a partner stampede requires tactical pawns that are "unsinkable", i.e. sufficiently robust to be able to safeguard them in a sustainable and autonomous manner; moreover, the possibility of a partner stampede makes it necessary to have "unsinkable" tactical pawns, i.e. sufficiently robust to be able to safeguard them in a sustainable and autonomous manner; moreover, the deployment of small teams of officers in partner formations - as in the case of the OMLT in Afghanistan - means disorganising the planned units and preventing them from having any capacity for intervention on their own.² Consequently, it seems essential to define a genuine doctrine to support conventional contact which guarantees the units concerned the capacity to intervene at short notice in an autonomous manner.³ in case of need.

In this context, a realistic doctrinal objective for a French SGTIA could be to⁴The aim is to train and support in combat the volume of one to three battalions - depending on their exact strength - by adopting a variable geometry system depending on the reliability of the partner and the operations envisaged. Thus, with a troop deemed untrustworthy engaged in a very hostile environment⁵In addition, the ASATM would remain organic, well backward, to support the manoeuvre⁶ of the local unit, for example through the use of a combination of UAVs and indirect support. Conversely, with units considered to be more reliable or in more permissive conditions, the French unit commander would be able to

detain the local unit, stain some of his sections within local units, integrating himself extensively into the manoeuvre by keeping a section-level reserve in his hand.

Incidentally, this means that each French leader at tactical level "n" would act as an "evening visitor" for the benefit of his local "n+1" level interlocutor.⁷ as part of the preparation of joint operations. This approach may seem to run counter to current army doctrine on AMOs.⁸ which only admits mentoring with an equivalent level of responsibility so as not to offend the partner's susceptibility. However, the aim of this study is to propose a more indirect form of mentoring, in which the French adviser unambiguously poses as a subordinate of the local chief and lets him design and then conduct his operation by influencing it solely through his advice, particularly in terms of coordination with the support provided by his secondment.⁹

In short, it would seem possible, by aiming at unit mix, to make an AMO system an efficient and rapid multiplier of the tactical capabilities of a partner unit, provided that it is based in a balanced way on the two inseparable pillars of training and operational support.

A pillar of both small and large contemporary wars

Firstly, a return to the oil spot method based on AMO appears to be a potential solution to the current challenge of counter-rebellion operations. Indeed, the theatre-wide intervention-stabilisation-normalisation continuum doctrine, as described in FT01, seems to have often led Western forces into stalemate: Indeed, once its adversaries have been defeated by a lightning-fast operational manoeuvre, the intervention force finds itself ultimately forced to assume the stabilisation of huge areas with largely insufficient manpower. On the other hand, to be inspired by Lyautey would be to conquer only what one knows is capable of rebuilding and administering, and above all to wait until it has been relieved by local forces supported by an AMO mechanism before relaunching new offensives.

But beyond that, the indirect approach to partnership is perhaps the only effective paradigm for state building. Indeed, the failure of the regime change in Iraq has highlighted the danger of engaging in political-military engineering experiments in regions with marked cultural differences with the West. On the other hand, taking advantage of what already exists by supporting, subject to political compensation, local actors who have proven their effectiveness - even if they have not yet been able to do so - can be a good idea. In contrast, taking advantage of the existing situation by supporting, subject to political compensation, local actors who have proven their effectiveness - even if they do not use Western methods - seems preferable to the creation of above-ground structures without any local legitimacy, supported at great expense.¹⁰ Thus, as Raymond Aron already pointed out, "we must be gardeners and not mechanics in the way we approach world affairs".¹¹

Finally, while ACA is an undeniable asset in asymmetric conflicts, the question of its relevance in hybrid conflicts deserves to be raised. Indeed, it is interesting to note that during the Ukrainian conflict, the Russian army partly adopted a mode of action similar to the AMO for the benefit of the Donbass militias. In response, part of France's contribution to the defence of Europe's eastern borders could therefore take the form of a strong AMO mechanism adapted to the context and aimed at increasing the effectiveness of local

conscript armies by providing them with high added value capabilities. The aim would thus be to recreate a real mass effect without having to commit and sustain large contingents of French troops more than 2 000 kilometres from the national territory.

In conclusion, while Lyautey's work in Morocco remains fully embedded in a specific and eminently complex historical context, it is nonetheless both revolutionary and visionary in many of its aspects. Nevertheless, it must be said that Lyautey's methods could not be reproduced identically today because of the significant differences in context between the early 20th century and our era. Yet, within the current AMO framework, Lyautey's approach remains relevant to the challenges posed by future conflicts, in that it consists of supporting a partner state by ensuring that it maintains a backward posture so that it is ultimately recognized as the legitimate victor over its enemies and not as the puppet of a foreign power.

One might wonder to what extent other military leaders of this era also contributed, in their own way, to the development of this way of thinking, as the famous quote from T.E. Lawrence's Twenty-seven Articles seems to indicate: "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them. Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of Arabia, your practical work will not be as good as, perhaps, you think it is.

- 1 Like the American Green Berets, whose real raison d'être is the AMO.
- 2 This makes it impossible, in particular, to have a QRF with a genuinely proven reliability, which is problematic in the context of operations conducted by conventional forces.
- 3 In this respect, the AGILIS mechanism of Operation Barkhane appears to be an interesting possibility.
- 4 Whether it is predominantly an on-board combat, landed combat or even air combat system.
- 5 Notably an urban environment that is heavily polluted and trapped by the adversary.
- 6 In this respect, the fact of having radio or satellite beacons allowing the integration into SICS of a blue force tracking of partner units seems particularly interesting.
- 7 However, it is still possible to envisage the presence of an "n+1" level adviser in addition, if necessary.
- 8 Or FTD 3.45.1, Land forces contribution to the AMO.
- 9 Moreover, the long-term beneficial effects of this approach on the French "mentors" themselves would undoubtedly prove significant, by requiring them to reason systematically at the "n+1" level.
- 10 Thus the Libyan presidential guard, created ex nihilo by the international community to protect the government of national accord in Tripoli, remains eminently fragile.
- 11 Raymond Aron: Peace and war between nations

Author (s) : les chefs de bataillon BURTIN, de LASTOURS et THELLIER
Release date 05/03/2019
