



Editorial by the Director of the Centre for Doctrine and Command Education

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"I feel too much, in view of the events of the past five years, the enormous struggles, the suffering endured, the unprecedented scale of the fighting and losses, the incomparable military effort...."

...the operations I report will appear minimal and risk-free. But we will want to go back to their date, remembering that twenty-five years ago, however modest these war operations may have been, they were the only ones. Nowhere else but in the colonies was a French soldier able to put his endurance, his learning of fire, his school of energy, decision and initiative to the test. And it should also be added that, all things considered, although such operations involved only small numbers of troops and reduced risks of war, they encountered difficulties of climate, terrain, distance and supplies which greatly increased their importance. Marshal Lyautey.

After discussing operational decision-making in the Army, this new issue of the RMG focuses its attention on Lyautey, this atypical and precursor officer, Marshal of France, who continues to inspire military leaders and those who have the heavy task of helping them decide.

When one speaks of this illustrious cavalry officer, one immediately thinks of his famous *Rôle social de l'officier*, a book imbued with humanity that is both vade me cum of the good officer and a more general reflection on the characteristics of the good military leader, one who knows how to surround himself and how to delegate by placing his trust in subordinates who adhere to his vision.

It also evokes the father of what we now call the "comprehensive approach". Served by his inquisitive mind and spontaneous respect for the diversity of cultures, Lyautey

understood very quickly that military action must be combined with other civilian forms of action and that this requires a fine knowledge of the peoples in whose midst the action is deployed.

Lyautey is finally, and above all, this preamble to the Letters of Tonkin and Madagascar dated 1919, placed in the foreground. In this lucid and relevant, humble and full of teachings, the Marshal delivers a message of great richness for the present time. He reminds us that we do not choose the place and the moment of the truthful test that every operational commitment constitutes. He says that we must do well what we have to do, where we are, without exaggerating the scope of the experience but without devaluing it because this complementarity of experiences, this slow sedimentation of our experiences, constitutes a capital for tomorrow's operations.

Happy reading!

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