



The emergence of new weapons has always led soldiers to question the legitimacy of their use 1/2

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Doesn't the arrival of drones on the battlefield transform the soldier into a remote operator partially relieved of responsibility? This is what Lt-Gen (2S) Henri PONCET is trying to answer.

Lhe drone, rupture and revolution in the art of warfare

Lhe executioner and the robot

The Western model of warfare has been built since antiquity on the search for the decisive battle so that, if possible and without discussion, there will be a winner and a loser. Over the centuries the model has evolved according to the means used, the weapons available and the profile of the combatants.

The hoplites of the Greek phalanx carry the shield on the left and are protected on the right by the shields of the neighbouring column. It is a totally monolithic formation.

The Romans improved the organization with a device more in depth. The first wave of hastatithrows the pilum and then engages the opponent's line with the sword. The second wave of principes throws in turn the pilum over the hastati and supports or engages in turn in the spaces left free by the first. The combatants are gathered around the chief who is in the front row and their emblem, united by esprit de corps.

This model of combat continues over the centuries, including the use of gunpowder on the battlefield, the first known use of which in Europe is its use by the English at CRÉCY. Nevertheless, the arrival of fire on the battlefield will gradually allow a more distant combat and will upset the psychology of the fighter used until then to face the enemy eye to eye and hand to hand.

At sea, the ship and its cannons will sweep away the tactics of the galleys, which won the decision by ramming the opponent before engaging him with the banche weapon. At TRAFALGAR, the English guns would not give the French and Spanish ships a chance.

The considerable increase in firepower associated with a mobility not much different from that of Napoleon's armies explains the hecatomb of the first months of the First World War. During the Second World War, the belligerents will always seek the decisive battle until the use of the atomic weapon.

Since then, the Western model, which gives pride of place to the warrior, to the bond and to the often invoked esprit de corps, has been confronted with the asymmetrical model of insurrection, guerrilla warfare, revolutionary wars and terrorist actions. In this model, direct and decisive confrontation is avoided. It is time, even interlocking, that is sought to wear down the adversary and his public opinion psychologically (losses, costs, media coverage, etc.) until he decides to abandon the game. In this enemy, the link is formed and cultivated around the cause, the ideology, a link definitively established by the death of anonymous people delivered in the terrorist act, but seen as barbaric by the one who is hit.

This long preamble was intended to show that radical changes in structures, models and mentalities are in progress and that it is necessary to know how to respond to asymmetry by using technological advance. In this field, the use of robotic systems is part of these new approaches, robotic systems at the forefront of which are the UAVs.²⁰

The use of UAVs as a reconnaissance or attack weapon in the third dimension marks a technological, doctrinal but also psychological, and even ethical breakthrough in the use of air weapons.

From massive bombardments to the elimination of the individual

The carpets of bombs dropped on German or Japanese cities by the US Air Force, the bombing of London by the Luftwaffe, the V1 and V2 marked the Second World War because, beyond the objectives of stations, ports or factories, it was a question of influencing the resistance capacity of the populations by terrorising them. During this war, civilian casualties exceeded combat losses.

However, the context of the bombing modalities was already in place. One of the American aviators testifies: 'I was accomplishing my mission nearly four miles above the point of impact. In these circumstances, it is difficult to have the slightest feeling of harming an enemy...²¹ ». On the other hand, during destructive raids on TOKYO at lower altitudes, some pilots who visualize the effects of the bombardment display psychological disorders on return from the mission.

This distance from the adversary, from the target, which seems to take the responsibility away from the author of the high-altitude bombing, makes one wonder about the drone pilots who handle their targets on the other side of the world from their base in Nevada. In the film Good Kill, the hero, a former fighter pilot, at a very great distance from his enemy, no longer takes any risks and can no longer bear to visualize in great detail the precise results of his strikes, refusing to become, according to him, a killer. Jesse Glenn GRAY, an American officer during the Second World War and a philosopher, wrote in his notebooks, perhaps premonitoryly: "If our wars were to turn all fighters into killers, civilian life would be threatened for generations to come, or it would simply become impossible. »

Of course, we cannot dismiss the concern of our Western societies to keep their soldiers at minimum risk, or even to evacuate them altogether if technology permits.

We would like to remember this famous concept of "zero dead" (in everyone will have understood it) which deserves a brief development. A purely Western, American concept, the "zero dead" appeared at the time of the first Gulf War in the autumn of 1990 on 28 February. February 28, 1991 with, at the beginning, the legitimate ambition to have the most efficient health chain possible to save the wounded. But Somalia brought the Americans, with their characteristic pragmatism, very quickly back to reality.²²

It has become by pernicious extension a concept of rich countries whose foundations are at once economic, geopolitical and above all societal, according to an argument that could also illustrate "zero risk".

The economic foundations are part of a supposed or hoped-for mastery of technology, information and communication techniques. It is a question of waging war at a distance, of keeping the worst at bay for oneself, without reciprocity.

And it is in this context that, over the last ten years or so, we have seen an increase in the number of interventions by armed drones. This mode of action was initiated by the Israelis for surgical strikes against the leaders of Hamas in the GAZA strip as early as 1982. The Americans saw the value of this new weapon, this new mode of action, in the fight against terrorist movements for which attack is the preferred mode of action (car bombs, suicide bombers, etc.). The armed drone has become the dominant weapon in this war. Indeed, it is difficult to stop a terrorist. And when you arrest him, it is difficult to make him talk, even by torturing him. And then, it is difficult to imprison him (GUANTANAMO) when there is no legally declared war. It becomes much easier to neutralize him, that is to say, to kill him. Especially since there is no risk, there are no or few images and it is not very expensive.

But, all this must remain very secret. Also, among the Americans, this mode of action is essentially the responsibility of the CIA, which keeps the Kill List up to date. Some observers currently estimate that the victims of American drones are in the order of 6 000, including a large number of collateral damage to those accompanying the identified targets.

Ethics in the use of UAVs

Does this weapon of retaliation or repression pose an ethical problem and does it not deprive the soldier of what he has been given up to now? a special place in the history of human societies and civilizations in the sense that there is no longer reciprocity of risk? Just as is often the case in terrorist acts.

Ethics. This is a word that is a recipe for success. But does ethics exist as such? In fact, to summarize it succinctly, there are two models of ethics:

- Ethics of deontology. This form of ethics is conceived independently of any consequences that might result from our actions. According to the German philosopher Immanuel KANT, one must not lie to avoid an evil because the obligation to tell the truth is absolute.

- Teleological ethics. It emphasizes the finalities, the effects of an action which can only be judged good or bad according to the consequences. And it is on the result, afterwards, that we can judge the merits of the decision. Moreover, the French philosopher Alain Badiou goes so far as to say that ethics does not exist, there is no such thing as

ethics. There is only the ethics of truths (of politics, love, science, art), in other words the ethics of situation.

And to add to the complexity of the subject, the German economist and sociologist Max Weber writes in his book *The Scientist and the Diplomat*: "This brings us to the decisive problem. It is essential that we clearly realize that any ethics-oriented activity can be subordinated to two completely different and irreducibly opposed maxims. It can be oriented according to the ethics of responsibility [Verantwortungsethisch] or according to the ethics of conviction [Gesinnungsethisch]. This does not mean that the ethics of conviction is the same as the absence of responsibility and the ethics of responsibility is the same as the absence of conviction.

Compare, for example, the 6,000 American drone casualties to the 60,000 civilian casualties of the Allied bombing of France in preparation for and during the Normandy landings. Other times, other morals or in each situation the most relevant decision?

Winston CHURCHILL, to whom his admirals explained that half of the ships and the troops transported by thousands across the Mediterranean to reinforce the British army in Egypt would be lost, replied:

"I know, but there'll be a lot of that going around. Do you want us to lose the war? ». The same questioning was no doubt asked of American President Harry S. TRUMAN before the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In this, they joined SAINT-JUST who said that "the only justification for war is victory".

Today, the risk can enter into a calculated assessment. But not uncertainty, which is perceived as an unacceptable and intolerable threat. Around what appears to be an exacerbation of the precautionary principle is the rejection of this uncertainty and the attribution of power to theoreticians and experts, but not to pragmatists.

21. In English, a drone is a drone drone and the term was used to designate a flying target in the 1930s.

22. Philip ARDERY, *Bomber Pilot: A Memoir of World War II*, LEXINGTON: University Press of Kentucky, 1978.

23. On October 3, 1993, during the peacekeeping operation RESTORE HOPE to restore order in Somalia, the U.S. Army lost 18 men in MOGADISCIO. This defeat, which provokes the rapid withdrawal of troops, will be brought to the screen, with a lot of realism, by Ridley SCOTT in *The Fall of the Black Falcon*.

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