



The new forms of war and the future of Air-Land operations

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War today encompasses many forms and understanding the enemy is hence -forth questioned by his protracted use of hybrid strategies. Given the dire consequences a potential ill-suited military apparatus could lead to, both our enemy's hybrid warfare and our own constraints compel us to humbly extend our thinking accordingly.

Undoubtedly, the times of tac-tical and operational certainties have long passed. Moreover, although the multifaceted evolutions of warfare are well known, determining their scope is far from easy.

First, the changing nature of the operating environ-ment, invariably intricate, is to be considered. New forms of conflict are blurring the edges between public and private actors involved in violence, and between conventional armed forces, armed groups, militias, and organized crime. Violence itself develops into a polymorphic phenomenon, from its institutionalized form, invol-ving armed forces, to terrorism, surgical strikes, hostage crises or the use of special forces. In addition, violence today lies beyond the scope of international law. Lastly, cities will turn to be the heart of tomorrow's operational environment.

Second, the technological domination that Western armed forces have long enjoyed is no longer to be taken for granted. Our enemies are now embracing cheap civilian technologies (such as drones, 3D printing, chemical and biological agents, IEDs) and resort to psychological warfare entailing fake news and cyber threats. Consequently, our supremacy, as far as information systems, cyberspace and the third dimension are concerned, is gone. By investing in the above-mentioned areas, our enemy could even-tually recover the very symmetric capabilities it lost on the ground.

Yet, notwithstanding these developments, none can pretend that the way to wage war is to change drastically. Principles of war are far from being disputed, and the use of force remains subject to the mastery of long-term operational capacities. Furthermore, there are no grounds to consider that current or anticipated enemies could earn a sustainable strategic win or

destroy our forces, should we suffer from a tactical defeat. Nonetheless, the French military apparatus is committed to adapting its operational preparation and envisions developing a large spectrum of means and forces able to deploy on the ground. In that respect, our capability development should be comprehensive, and no capacity should be discarded. Likewise, strategic foresight, feedback, doctrine, equipment and training continue to form a critical continuum.

The French Army is intrinsically bound by an ongoing process of continuous reform. It has participated in a range of missions, such as peacekeeping, evacuations, stabilization missions, and counter-insurgency (Afghanistan, Sahel). Currently, it is engaged on the national soil, is helping to destroy ISIS in Iraq, and participates in NATO 's presence in the Baltics. The French Army now has to solve the following puzzle : how to defeat multiple and different non-state enemies acting outside the frame of ethics, while maintaining the consistency of a well-structured and hierarchized military apparatus? Solving this may involve a deep reflection at the tactical and operational levels of war (known in French as “ art opératif ”) and an enhancement of agility. Finally, if we should fully seize the opportunities driven by technology, we must prevent ourselves from succumbing to the pitfall of dependency.

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