



The Tactical Commander's Guide to Command and Control in Operations



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Backed up by historical examples, it is first and foremost intended to provide food for thought for our officers, in particular the youngest of them, but also for each and every commander who may one day be called upon to exercise command and control in operations.

This doctrinal manual is part of the ongoing series of 'Capstone Doctrine' documents of the Army's doctrinal corpus. It is also intended to specify the French approach to operational command in the light of the field manuals and handbooks that our key allies have recently published on the same topic.

Brigadier General Olivier TRAMOND



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PREFACE

The conditions for the use of military force have changed. In today's typical engagements, military action may represent only one line of operations among many others. This evolution is described in the Army's employment of land forces in present and future conflicts Capstone Doctrine *Winning the Battle, Building Peace* (FT-01). In a context where tactics has regained importance, ground military action now meets three tactical objectives as described in the tactical manual *General Tactics* (FT-02): **force the enemy, control the environment and influence perceptions.**

As command and control functions do not change significantly over time, the foundations of command in operations cannot be separated from those in peacetime, and both tend to interact. The question here is not whether to rewrite existing documents¹ or to revisit the foundations and principles of soldiering in the Army that have already been presented in comprehensive and detailed documents². It is, rather, to present in a single doctrinal manual the exercise of command and control in operations for French tactical commanders.

Nevertheless, one should not lose sight of the specificity of command and control in operations which always includes, when appropriate, a choice between tactical effectiveness, or 'necessary boldness', and fair consideration for the risks in combat, or 'essential caution'.

1 *TTA 956* (organisation du commandement) "*Organization of Command and Control*", *TTA 902*, *TTA 903* and *TTA 904* (fonctionnement des PC des niveaux 1, 2 et 3) "*Operations of Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 CPs*" and *EMP 60 631* (méthode d'élaboration d'une décision opérationnelle) "*Military Decision Making Process*".

2 Livre vert l'exercice du métier des armes dans l'armée de Terre "*Green Handbook: Soldiering in the French Army*".

This is why this doctrinal manual focuses on both recent changes in the exercise of command and control in operations and on the aspects of the field that never change. It also serves to establish guiding principles of operational command and control, as our main allies have done.

This doctrinal manual does not aim to be exhaustive. It is intended for any and all commanders who have been entrusted with a command, be they officers exercising an organic command with an operational task, officers commanding a Force Headquarters (*'EMF'* in French) unit, a brigade, a battalion or a company. It is aimed at any army officer exercising command and control in operations. This document is also intended for those among their subordinates who have a significant share of responsibility at their level. Furthermore, this document covers the entire tactical spectrum from the division commander down to platoon leaders.

PART I - ADAPTING COMMAND AND CONTROL TO THE CONDITIONS OF AN ENGAGEMENT AND ITS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

I.1 THE CONTINUUM OF OPERATIONS MEANS CHANGING CONDITIONS FOR THE EXERCISE OF COMMAND AND CONTROL

In very simplified terms, today's operational commitments are characterized by three major phases within a single continuum: intervention, stabilization, and normalization. Each phase comprises, in varying proportions, periods and situations of intense violence that may include acts typical of war as well as periods of calm and relative stability. The precise transition from one phase to another is difficult to perceive and transition periods between phases may be long. Situational awareness within this continuum of operations is therefore essential for the tactical commander.

In the **initial phase of intervention**, command and control often relate to combat. This phase, which brings together conventional and unconventional armed forces, must be planned with consideration for the follow-on phases of stabilization and normalization. For operational planning, this may cause conflicting considerations.

In the **stabilization phase**, the accumulation of often antagonistic constraints poses major difficulties for the commander. This phase is eminently more complex and far more difficult to grasp for the commander who is then only one player among several in the theater of operations.

- The ideological or even religious nature of certain conflicts requires **in-depth consideration of different and foreign ways of thinking and cultural references**. This presents a challenge for which westerners are often unprepared.

- This phase can only be successful in the long term. It is based on the **action's continuity and permanence**, which is not easily compatible with the perpetual rotation cycle of commanders and units. At present, all western armed forces practice some system of operational rotation. Within this context it is essential to keep in mind the **purpose of the operation, or 'desired end state'**. For

the military commander, this means integrating into his reasoning the fact that the aims of his local initiatives, which may only last a few months, may ultimately play a part in achieving a strategic objective of which the implementation is years away.

- ➔ During the stabilization phase, controlling the environment requires long term deployment of large numbers of forces on the ground, while the reduced format of western armed forces means it is no longer possible to be present everywhere in a given theater. This situation leads the military commander to combine certain processes and courses of action with an eye towards cost efficiency and also to take calculated risks.

- ➔ New forms of warfare, often conducted among populations and in urban areas, have fundamentally changed the game in terms of the selection of courses of action, and therefore the exercise of command and control.

In the **normalization phase**, during which daily life returns to normal, armed forces no longer have primacy. The military commander most often acts only in support of other players for whose benefit he may have to provide all or part of the means at his disposal, including command and control functions. He must always demonstrate situational awareness by rethinking his action depending on the key players.

The role and place of the commander in operations can change frequently, depending on the particular phase of the operation. As the operation develops, the commander's freedom of action decreases while at the same time external constraints increase. From being a major player on the ground, he becomes provider of support to other civilian or local players. At the same time, regardless of the phase of an operation, the foundations of command remain unchanged; in particular the military commander's necessary adaptation to the environment in which he acts and brings meaning to his actions.

I.2 THE MISSION MUST BE FIRMLY DEFINED IN A SCOPE CONCERNING ALL PLAYERS

The military commander at any level of command must ensure that his actions fall within a mission scope in an environment that is most often interagency (governmental or otherwise), interallied, and always joint and combined arms. Today, an increasingly horizontal relationship exists between the commander and the players in his environment, often in the shape of a network. This tends to supplement the standard vertical pattern of command and control relationships.

1.2.1 Maneuvers Are Comprehensive and the Tactical Commander's Partners in Operations Do Not All Belong to the Military

Ground military action, initiated at the strategic level and planned at the operational level, is devised within a global crisis management framework that combines political, diplomatic, defense, cultural, economic and communications aspects.

Within this framework, it is essential that all civilian and military players act in synergy and coherence. All actions must therefore be part of a logical process aimed at achieving the political objective assigned to the operation. The military commander must therefore not only take into account the presence of other players and their actions in theater, but seek optimal coordination with them. It is therefore up to him to position himself correctly in relation to these players while ensuring that his actions, starting from the planning phase are fully consistent with the objectives of non-military operations.

These other players may come from French authorities (interagency framework) or from international or non-governmental organizations (interagency and international framework). Coordination with these players is essential, though it takes both time and persuasion. The effectiveness of cooperative efforts depends on the quality of personal relationships established and maintained by the military commander with his civilian partners in the theater of operations. However, it would be unrealistic to believe that the military could impose, and therefore control, coordination efforts with individuals and organizations with differing points of view. The military remains

nevertheless the required point of contact for all these other players because of its central location on the ground, the wealth and diversity of the assets it has at its disposal and the availability of its personnel.

This comprehensive maneuver, particularly visible during the stabilization phase and inherent in the normalization phase, bring the military commander to play on all the operational lines at his disposal to meet his operational or strategic objectives. As such, he loses the supremacy and freedom of action that were his during the intervention phase and gradually becomes one player among many in theater. Though still a key player, he must adapt to the role of assisting others as an 'enabler.'

At the time of the Liberation, the powers of the general commanding the 1st Army went beyond the strictly tactical scope of his commitment and encroached on the political and governmental fields. This was due to constraints at the time when the entire apparatus of government had to be reestablished in each *département*³ as it was liberated, according to the principle of respecting national interests within a coalition.

To meet the expanded scope of these roles, General de Lattre very quickly had to set up a 'civilian cabinet', which he carefully and consistently kept apart from his staff. With respect to the skill sets needed, he looked for them outside of the military and remained uninhibited by formal observance of hierarchy. From the outset, he required a mix of men and women. Much envied by the military staff, this civilian cabinet was mocked as the 'League of de Lattre's People'⁴. The cabinet was led by Ludovic Tron, a Public Finance Inspector, who was replaced by Bondoux when Finance Minister Pleven called on him to head his own cabinet. There was future Nobel laureate Jacques Monod, then director of the Pasteur Institute, Worms, Raoul de Lamazière, an Auditor at the *Conseil d'Etat*, André Chamson, a writer and future member of the *Académie française* as well as Joseph Kessel. The female half of the cabinet was represented by Edmonde Charles Roux, Deferre's future wife, Monique Villemin, wife of General Guillaumat, General de Gaulle's first Minister of the Armed Forces and Dr. Solange Troisier who was a hospital intern at 23!

³ Translator's note: French administrative area. The mainland is currently divided into 96 *départements*.

⁴ Translator's note: play on words, the "Société des gens de lettres" refers to a famous writers association.

1.2.2 Multinational Commitments Are Now the Rule

"I admire Napoleon a great deal less since commanding a coalition."

General Sarrail, In Salonika, 1916⁵

Today, the armed forces are most often committed within a multinational framework, in order to implement the decisions of the international community regarding collective security matters. In most cases, the United Nations confers the legitimacy and legality necessary to justify military action, which makes the multinational aspect almost unavoidable.

For the military commander, the multinational nature of engagements presents yet another challenge: multinational interoperability. The challenge lies in understanding and taking into account the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of allies that are not always of the commander's choosing. The challenge is of a dual nature: firstly, the units must possess enough mutual knowledge of languages and cultures to be able to understand each other. Secondly, different national contingents must have compatible doctrines and procedures so that they can operate together. Compatibility of equipment is the corollary of the rest. This observation forces the commander to be mindful of operating with a different culture from his own. He will also have to plan and execute maneuvers with a realistic approach to multinational operations designed at national unit level⁶.

⁵ This quotation is very often incorrectly attributed to Marshal Foch.

⁶ If brigades are multinational and battalion combined arms task forces are purely national, then the level for designing the maneuver should be limited to the battalion; a scheme of maneuver at any level includes coordinating immediate subordinate units.

Yet again, the relationship building aspect of command and control assumes an important role. Although it is a source of unquestionable legitimacy, the multinational framework of engagements may nevertheless generate the difficulties mentioned above, compounded by the technological gap that may exist between allies in terms of digitization.

This multinational nature of today's engagements necessitates constantly seeking maximum interoperability between different national contingents making up the force, while keeping in mind the appropriate realistic approach and safeguarding respective national interests. Therefore, in addition to the other professional qualities required of the commander, he must show a fair degree of diplomacy⁷.

In 1944, General Omar Bradley was designated commander of the American 12th Army Group, a post he would retain for the remainder of the campaign until the German surrender. In this role, he was in direct contact with General Eisenhower's combined and interallied staff, known as SHAEF, where he was able to assess the effects of a multinational coalition first hand. His perspective was somewhat limited by the fact that forces were purely national up to and including the army level for the US, UK, Canadian and French militaries. Only Polish forces were integrated at corps level. This explains why Bradley's opinion carried so much weight.

"Even in an Allied command where soldiers of several nations engage in a common struggle for survival, judgments are further complicated by a fierce and sometimes jealous love of country. This cannot be ignored no matter how zealously one may strive to subordinate it to a mutual undertaking. Although this allegiance is keenly developed in the ordinary citizen, it is even more intensively cultivated in the professional soldier who commits his life to the defense of the flag he salutes each day."

General Bradley
Preface to *A Soldier's Story*
(Modern Library, 1999, Page xxviii)

⁷ The commander's qualities, including his persuasiveness, are further developed in Part IV of this document.

1.2.3 While Air-Land Engagements Are by Nature Combined Arms, They Cannot Be Conceived Outside a Joint Framework, Including at the Tactical Level.

Air-land action is in essence combined arms. Inhabited areas are now a common location for engagements, which accentuates the need for combined arms action because of decentralization of combat down to the lowest echelons. As posture changes between the initial deployment or intervention phase and the stabilization phase, coercive actions give way to ones geared towards controlling the operational environment.

Military action, most often land-oriented, systematically falls within the scope of a joint commitment. Military assets, throughout the duration of the commitment, remain under the operational command of the Joint Chief of Staff, making command inherently joint in nature. Furthermore, once the transfer of authority to the theater's armed forces commander has taken place, the land component's tactical action falls within an operational framework where coordination of its various components becomes a pressing need, particularly in the field of combat support and airspace control. It therefore requires the tactical commander to be permanently concerned with the joint integration of actions. This may occur down to the lowest levels of command, e.g. with air support. The commander must have a vision broader than his own tactical level and assess the increased value or constraints that other services are likely to bring to his maneuver.

The experience with combined arms and joint operational environments that the commander acquires throughout his career is an essential prerequisite for the use of the military instrument.

I.3 TWO MAJOR IMPERATIVES TO BE COMPLIED WITH

I.3.1 Include Legal Factors into C2 Decision-Making

Legal liability, which is often blamed today on the increasing judicialization of military engagements, engages military commanders from the tactical levels upwards. It also falls within the scope of both the Law of Armed Conflict and that of the enforcement of national legislation. This upward trend affects all tactical commanders, even those with regulatory authority in an operation whose legality is established either nationally or internationally, with the corresponding Rules of Engagement (ROE) in theater. Law 2005-270 enacted March 24, 2005, concerning the general status of military personnel defines the commander's legal responsibilities in combat. In particular, the law states that the military commander cannot be challenged legally on the consequences of his decisions, provided that he or his staff were properly carrying out their responsibilities. Any commander exercising command and control responsibility at levels 1 to 3, is therefore assigned a legal advisor ('LEGAD' in NATO jargon).

In his actions, the commander must therefore comply with both the spirit and the letter of the Law of Armed Conflict, the Defense Code and any established ROE in theater.

In the summer of 1995 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, when circumstances had begun to distort the normal exercise of command and responsibilities within UNPROFOR, the signs of a coming Serb attack on the town of Srebrenica were conclusive, but French generals were criticized for not planning any military counter-actions despite strong evidence to suggest a Serb offensive on the town of Srebrenica, and then for not ordering or conducting any such actions when the Serb activity came to pass. Consequently, when a mass grave was uncovered in Srebrenica after the Serb withdrawal, the French generals were explicitly threatened with a summons to appear before the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague. It took all the power of the French executive to prevent them from appearing in The Hague, even as mere witnesses.

1.3.2 Communicate Information During the Action, at One's Level of Competence or Responsibility

While current information technology plays a part in reducing the time necessary to share knowledge, it creates a desperate need for information as the matter in hand competes with sensationalism. The power of the media, torn between urgency and ratings, directly affects the understanding of crises and the way they are handled. For example, a situation in which immediate emotion and compassion prevail over reason can expose or even overexpose the military force and its commander.

Total control of information may be impossible, but mastering techniques of operational communication is an absolute necessity. The legitimacy and effectiveness of the force's action are no longer sufficient; one must add to it how people at local, national and international levels, as well as those in the committed force, perceive it. Within a context where perception may supplant reality, the military commander must constantly be aware of the critical questions of what to communicate, when, where, through who and via what medium or intermediary? It is sometimes necessary to encourage the lowest echelons of command to communicate effectively; equally, the commander must know how to communicate himself when necessary. In this regard it should be taken as an absolute rule that, when authorized, everyone communicate about his mission at his level, excluding any higher level strategic and political considerations.

Keeping this in mind, every commander at every level must know the basic rules of communication and should request the dissemination of key information releases and messages from higher echelons when appropriate. Furthermore, at complex C2 levels, from task force level upwards, the commander usually has a public affairs (PA) officer who helps him to devise and implement the commander's external communications according to the established guidelines. However, the commander must still strike a balance between direct personal communication, which is sometimes necessary, and the use of a communication specialist, appropriate as an intermediary for a long-term relationship with the media.

It is therefore important for the commander to assess clearly how much room for maneuver he has, in order to take into account these constraints, but without being inhibited by them.

1.4 OPTIMIZE AND MASTER NEW TECHNOLOGIES

'Battlefield digitization' (*'NEB' pour « numérisation de l'espace de bataille » in French*) and the now widespread access to 'new information and communication technologies' (*'NTIC' pour « nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication » in French*), add new dimensions to the exercise of command and control. High technology is now intrinsic to all conflicts, whatever their nature: symmetrical, dissymmetrical or asymmetrical. *Digitization* represents a revolution in military affairs on the same scale as the effects of the Internet on the whole of society. With digitization comes the need for adaptation, and this requires sustained training, maintained throughout a career. The main challenge to be addressed is the resistance to change inherent in any technological shift.

Digitization significantly shortens the cycle of the decision-making process. Major progress can be expected and is likely to be noticed mainly in terms of changes in the employment of Combat Support (CS) and Combat Service Support (CSS).

Digitization necessitates **specific and continual training for the staff and proper positioning of the commander** with regard to this tool. *Battlespace digitization* provides an enhanced visualization of the situation and better information sharing. It is meant to promote command dialogue when planning and drafting orders. As a staff tool, it serves as a decision-making aid for the commander. He must, nevertheless, fully take into account the limits of digitization. Players who are virtually 'absent' from the reference tactical situation are at risk of being completely forgotten and thus becoming a victim of friendly fire. Being able to visualize the subordinate disposition presents risks, such as micromanagement by the commander down to the lowest levels. This risk of 'meddling' at subordinate levels must be avoided at all costs while the sharp and precise knowledge of the overall friendly situation must, on the contrary, serve to promote a good command environment. The commander's situational awareness, his intuition and his ability to make choices, remain at the heart of the decision-making process.

Digitization must facilitate timely decision-making without allowing the commander to become incapacitated by waiting for further information, as the one in hand is never as comprehensive as wished. However, a precise and correct knowledge of the disposition of friendly forces (both subordinate and adjacent units) as well as the receipt of automatically forwarded logistics reports, are not a substitute for the commander's perception of his subordinate's ability to conduct the mission (morale, mission understanding). As such, digitization becomes an operational efficiency multiplier among others. It reinforces, rather than removes, the importance and necessity of command and control dialogue⁸.

Access to advanced technology is not the reserve of 'conventional' military forces. Irregular opponents constantly adapt their tactics, techniques and procedures as well, taking advantage of all benefits of today's technologies. In the race for technical sophistication, western armed forces can be the victims of their own cumbersome procedures for equipment development and procurement. Therefore, against an irregular opponent, the keys to success cannot rely solely on technology. Faced with an elusive enemy and random courses of action and techniques, the commander must adapt his own procedures and processes, without expecting technology to solve everything. Technology is only a partial answer to the problem. In the allied fight against Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Afghanistan, experience shows that success is based 60% on procedures, 30% on technology and 10% on luck. Within this general example, one can clearly see the utmost importance of the role of orders given and subsequently command and control.

The military commander must take advantage of digital tools without being beholden to them. While relying on his experience and situational awareness, and making the most of his command support system, he must be able to assess when and where his physical presence and even his voice are essential. Accordingly, the information control permitted by digitization helps him make decisions better and faster.

⁸ This situation is further developed in Part III of this document.

In conclusion to this presentation of the impact of engagement context on command and control:

Taking into account factors including the nature, type and duration of operations, as well as the importance of law and regulations lead to an increasingly complex operational environment. These new constraints widen the military commander's mandate and compel him to understand and control his operational environment. One function required of the commander is to take these modern complexities into account at his own level and turn them into straightforward orders for his subordinates.

This type of environment directly impacts the command style of the commander in operations and requires a clear understanding of both the spirit and the letter of his orders.

PART II - COMMAND BY OBJECTIVES THROUGH THE COMMANDER'S INTENT

II.1 COMMAND AND CONTROL IS NOT WHOLLY RATIONAL BUT STILL A SCIENCE

NATO doctrine on command includes two complementary concepts: 'command' and 'control' (C2). Within NATO, which takes the American understanding of the terms, 'command' is limited to the drafting and dissemination of orders whereas 'control' refers to the conduct and coordination of current operations. By these definitions command is the most important part of C2, because it covers the commander's prerogatives and command responsibilities. It also covers the decision-making process, the exercise of authority and the unique and personal nature of command. Control describes all that deals with the running of command systems to accomplish the mission while abiding by the commander's intent, and covers Command Post (CP) systems as well as their operation and related equipment. The concept of command, which calls upon the commander's intelligence and intuition is part of the art of command, whereas control, which is based on organizations, structures, methods and technology, is part of the science.

Within this framework, situations are presented to the commander in all manners covering all conceivable contingencies. The exercise of command, however, is subject only to a single rule: the unrelenting need for hard facts that the commander cannot ignore or neglect or his command is to fall apart. Realities, such as the mission, environment, enemy, and population will always be decisive.

C2 is almost universally accepted as both an art, focused on the commander's personality, intuition and ultimately the expression of his intent and a science, as it is based on systems, methods and organizations.

Given the gravity of the situation created by the sudden German offensive in the Ardennes on December 16, 1944, and the stir it caused, General Eisenhower summoned his army commanders two days later to General Bradley's CP. General Patton, Commander, 3rd Army, took the floor to declare: *"My army is prepared to seize the offensive within 48 hours to break the deadlock of 101st Airborne at Bastogne."* Eisenhower did not hide his irritation with what he saw as more boasting from his famously fiery subordinate. As a matter of fact, starting such a maneuver in the Saar area northeastwards towards the Rhine River would require significant preparation for the 3rd Army to execute a 90° turn with a total reorientation of all its logistical axial routes without cutting off any route. But Patton resumed: *"Ike, for the last 72 hours, since my G2 reported to me the first indicators of a German counterattack; I set all my staff to work on the detailed planning of several attacks. This work is completed. When I go back to my CP at the end of this meeting, I'll issue my orders and - within 48 hours - the 3rd Army will be crossing the line of departure."* This is exactly what came to pass.

II.2 DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR STYLES OF COMMAND

Military history shows that all commanders have referred to two general types of command style: 'directive command,' also called 'command by order' or 'detailed command' in the English-speaking world and '*Führung mittels Befehl*' by the German, and 'command by objective',⁹ known in English as 'mission command' or '*Führung mit Auftrag*' in the German Army. On the one hand, in detailed command, the purpose to be achieved and the assets available are specified, as are the rules for implementation. Mission command, on the other hand, leaves greater flexibility to subordinate levels that must assimilate the commander's concept of operations to reach the intended objective. The differentiation between the two is a matter of general trends, and the two styles are not mutually exclusive.

⁹ Both terms 'command by order' and 'command by objective' may be misleading as to the notion of orders. The terms were kept because the French Army had already previously adopted them. It is recognized that both styles of command result in the issue of orders.

II.2.1 Detailed Command

Detailed command states that victory results from the commander's will. Inherently deterministic, this style of command is based on a hierarchy and linked to a high degree of formal discipline. Command relationships are thus strictly vertical.

However, this form of command should not be equated with an arbitrary caricature. This style of command may be applied in varying degrees in particularly difficult or 'stuck' engagements, when rapid reactions require a centralization of immediate and enforceable command decisions. Even if they are following the commander's intent, the initiative of subordinates is not always sufficient to deal with rapidly changing situations, especially if friendly troops or ongoing maneuvers are endangered. Detailed command may also be deemed necessary when the success of an operation is based on secrecy, or when the urgency of the situation imposes deadlines for design.

The way General de Lattre took command of the French Expeditionary Corps in Indochina in December 1951 as the military situation was verging on disaster was a remarkable example of effective command by order from a commander endowed with an exceptional personality and extraordinary charisma. Gathering together his cadre of officers in Hanoi on December 19, 1951, he said:

"Our fight is selfless; it is civilization as a whole that we are defending in Tonkin. Never has war been worthier. I am bringing war to you, but also the pride of war. The era of vacillation is over. I can assure you, gentlemen from both the military and the civilian world, French and Vietnamese, that from now on you will be commanded. Whatever the circumstances, I forbid any withdrawal, even from the smallest outpost. That is all."



A similar scene was seen in Haiphong the following day. He further declared:

"It is for you, lieutenants and captains, that I have come, you who are bearing the brunt of this war and playing so vital a role. You must be aware that I do not have time to dispense justice, only to make examples."

General Salan, who was present, remarked:

"What mysterious powers! This man is a true magician! I saw it in their eyes; the general has just transformed the expeditionary corps."

Despite these warnings, General Boyer de la Tour, the senior commander in Tonkin, authorized the withdrawal of a partisan platoon-sized element from an isolated outpost on the Chinese border. That very evening he was relieved by General de Linares and put aboard a plane bound for France.

General Gras

Histoire de la guerre d'Indochine (History of the Indochina war)
(Plon, Paris 1979, pages 368-369)

Finally, resorting to detailed command can become the general rule when a unit is placed under tactical control (TACON) to support another nation's unit in performing previously specified tasks, most likely outside its zone and within a multinational framework.

II.2.2 Mission Command

Mission command is always based on a concept of operations clearly expressed by the commander and rests on the initiative granted to subordinates, their intellectual discipline and their responsiveness to reach the goals set by the higher echelon.

Resorting to this form of command aims at promoting the necessary adaptability of ongoing maneuvers to the continuing developments of the situation, through the chosen disposition and course of action, by the judicious application of the principles of war that are then applied to command relationships:

- freedom of action, as a guarantee for taking initiatives, but determined by the commander at all levels who assume responsibility;
- economy of forces, aimed at adapting available means to a given mission through genuine command dialogue;
- concentration of efforts, achieved by a clear expression of the concept of operations that allows subordinates' actions to converge.

Applying these principles to command and control relationships is based on mutual trust between the commander and his subordinates. These principles are implemented by:

- the commander assuming responsibility when he issues orders;
- strict intellectual discipline on the subordinate's part when he carries them out.

Furthermore, command effectiveness is based on four complementary elements: the concept of operations, the subordinate's relative responsibility and sense of initiative, and the quality of the orders. These factors are further developed in the next section.

a) Freedom of action fosters initiative.

When the commander communicates from the onset the goals to be reached, or 'main effect' to his subordinate, but allows him to define the successive or simultaneous tasks to perform or the processes to use to successfully fulfill his mission, freedom of action is preserved at all command levels. Moreover, as the concepts of operations of successive levels are logically cascaded, the overall consistency of the maneuver is ensured.

It is also clear that mission command favors the responsiveness of subordinate levels should a threat unexpectedly occur or the situation change suddenly. When a higher echelon designs its maneuvers as an intent, supplemented by a scheme of maneuver, the threat in question might very well not have been fully considered, as war is contingent in nature. The subordinate is then able to reassess his mission and

conduct his action on his own initiative while focusing strictly on the effect to be achieved by the commander. The required situational awareness assumes that the subordinate is able and willing to assume responsibility.

b) Economy of forces is enhanced through command dialogue.

Mission command imposes a genuine command dialogue that goes beyond the sometimes rather formal framework of the 'back brief.' Well aware of the importance of his maneuvers within those of the higher echelon, the subordinate is able to assess and request reinforcements, intelligence or changes in action areas essential for the success of the action.

Interaction between levels is also emphasized, since by sending in a situation report, the subordinate informs his commander about the measures towards reaching the desired end state already taken at his level, as well as those he is able to take at short notice.

c) Concentration of efforts is achieved through the proactive and collective convergence of actions.

Finally, in order for this type of command to work throughout the chain of command, it is important that the drafting of the successive intents and descriptions of likely courses of action be expressed simply and unambiguously. In doing so, the commander must commit to objectives, seek to convince subordinates and staff, and not hide behind vague wording when drafting orders as General Gamelin did in 1940.

As such, mission command always results in more flexible maneuvers because it puts the subordinate in a favorable position to seize systematically any opportunity that may favor his initiative.

This form of 'bottom-up initiative,' by which the echelon in contact with the enemy is considered to be best placed to assess the local situation and its repercussions, is ideal for the fair use of the application of force.

In other words, using command by objective puts the focus on intellectual discipline.

The comparison between the two forms of command is not so much related to the phase of the ongoing operation, such as intervention or stabilization, as to the dimension of the time-space framework in which the commander conducts maneuvers. A limited time-space framework may correspond to command by order, whereas mission command may prevail in broader time-space constraints. This is particularly the case for stabilization operations at brigade level in which the operation order's timeframe may be several months, while the brigade's area of operations may be the size of several of mainland France's *départements*.

The frequent use of indirect maneuvers and the increased number of players involved both call for resorting to mission command, notably because in such cases a networking type of communications is preferred to a strictly vertical system. Finally, within this environment, higher echelon commanders are more involved in coordinating decentralized actions than directly commanding a single, centralized action.

These two styles of command are never mutually exclusive, but rather complement one another. Putting emphasis on one is never meant to exclude the other.

In absolute terms, mission command offers the best ratio of benefits to drawbacks and may allow the commander to better assess the amount of risk he is willing to accept. Conversely, in situations of acute crisis that require centralized decision-making, detailed command often prevails.

Furthermore, within the framework of a multinational coalition, the style of command selected by the commander will in turn determine the style of command in subordinate echelons. Finally, regardless of the environment, it is always the personality of the individual commander which will make him choose a particular style of command.

II.3 EXPRESSING INTENT: THE BEST WAY TO REDUCE UNCERTAINTY AND PROMOTE INITIATIVE BY SUBORDINATES

Information systems available today to western armed forces help to thin the so-called 'fog of war.' However, information collection and processing never completely eliminate uncertainty for the commander. A major risk would be to constantly delay decision-making, pending ever more exhaustive additional information. To avoid such a risk and to mitigate uncertainty, the commander must always be one step ahead in his decision-making. As Sir Liddell Hart put it in his colorful way, he must look over "the other side of the hill"¹⁰." In short, the commander must be able to anticipate.

Two approaches are possible in order to reduce uncertainty. The first is top-down and information-centric, and means providing the highest levels of command with considerable resources for collecting and processing information. The consequence of this approach is the pernicious effect of the highest levels having access to more accurate information than the lowest. It does not in any way reduce uncertainty for the lower levels who are responsible for execution. The second approach focuses on actions and the effects to be achieved on the ground. In this case, the commanders and their staffs are ready and trained to understand uncertainty as a factor inherent in warfare.

Marshal Foch, emphasizing the point to ensure that he was well understood, explained that he had always made decisions as to the enemy's intentions in a state of uncertainty, and that had he waited to have all information in hand, he would never have made any decision at all:

10 From Sir Liddell Hart's book, «The Other Side of the Hill: Germany's Generals their Rise and Fall».



“Intelligence? But it is useless, it is almost all wrong; one only knows afterwards which was true. I have never reported it. One sees what one wants to do, one sees if it can be done with what one has at one’s disposal, and then one does it. Intelligence about the enemy? You never know anything.... On the evening of the Marne [battle], when I was told that the Germans had gone, I didn’t understand! History?... In hindsight, one only reports intelligence that is known to have been accurate; but when one had to use it, one did not know it was! ... You see, what is needed is not to wait for intelligence, but to know what one wants. One does what one wants when one knows what one wants.”

Reported by Major Bugnet
En écoutant le maréchal Foch (Listening to Marshal Foch)
 (Grasset, Paris 1929, Page 121)

The intent feeds the concept of operations, which is the keystone of any operation order at any level considered¹¹.

➤ The commander’s essential concept of operations

The concept of operations is based on the notion of ‘main effect,’ a concept already in use in France, and adopted to some extent by allied forces. The concept of operations sets the common objective to be obtained within a defined time-space constraint. It establishes related sequencing and the role assigned to subordinates while imposing as limits to the initiative of subordinates the coordination measures deemed essential.

¹¹ Additionally, the importance of the commander’s personal responsibility when drafting orders is explained in Part IV of this document.

When inspecting the annual maneuvers of the Army in French North Africa in 1947, General Leclerc emphasized the 'desired end state,' or the 'commander's intent,' as the basis of his concept of operations:

"Whenever the end state is not clearly determined, the mission fails. Tell a detachment or task force commander: Make an effort on such and such an axis in order to seize such and such terrain feature, and then resume the advance on such and such direction, all this is a badly-given order. We need commanders at all levels to know the end state: The one for which one tries all possible means, by any routes, driving wherever you can, and for that, they must know the intent of their commander and the end state he intends to achieve. This is why, be simple when stating your missions, your intent is by all means the end state."

General Leclerc, quoted by General Compagnon
Ce que je crois (What I think)
 (page 138)

⇒ The need for subordinates to take (controlled) responsibility

The subordinate may take into account the relative share of action he is allocated to conduct his mission within the concept of operations, which states the purpose the commander hopes to achieve and the sequence of maneuvers to reach it within an established time-space constraint. It is from this angle that he understands whether or not he is tasked with the main effort, and this immediately gives an indication of the margin of initiative that will be his as well as the reinforcements he may request.

Accepting this notion of initiative implies for the commander a certain level of risk taking. This is why one must make sure that subordinates have understood the spirit of the mission, and the reason behind the frequent practice of the 'back brief' in the English-speaking world. The higher echelon's control is part of the normal senior-subordinate relationship and does not in any way imply mistrust.

Colonel Érulín, Commander, 2nd REP¹², at Kolwezi expressed his intent to his captains so that they could fully grasp the desired end state that their commanding officer sought to achieve as well as their place and role in the operation:

"Jump as close as possible to the European districts in order to get the benefit of surprise and seize the primary objectives.

To this end:

1. *Land the first wave (reduced HQ group, 3 companies) on DZ ALPHA, proceed as fast as possible towards the primary objectives without being delayed by the mopping up of residential districts.*
2. *Depending on the situation, land the second wave*
 - *either entirely on DZ ALPHA, in case of difficulties when entering the old town,*
 - *or partly on DZ ALPHA and partly on DZ BRAVO, if situation in the old town is under control.*
3. *Once situation in European districts is under control:*
 - *start mopping up native quarters,*
 - *try to liaise with Zairian units and the airfield."*

➡ It is important to inspire the subordinate levels with the spirit of initiative

After assimilating the commander's concept of operations, subordinate echelons must be able to decide how to conduct their mission at their level. They must also seize every opportunity likely to help them reach their objectives within the commander's intent.

¹² 2nd Foreign Legion Airborne Regiment.

In 1958, during the bataille du barrage, Colonel Buchoud, Commander, 9th RCP¹³, explained his style of command:

"No limitation, just a direction.

No objectives on the ground - an enemy to annihilate. Action comes first, not the staffs. Intelligence is the backbone of discipline - even sometimes to the detriment of the hierarchy - to achieve the aims set by the commander who helps to the best of his abilities, organizes the initiated action and fuels it rather than hinders it. War is full of opportunities that must be anticipated as much as possible and prevented, but above all not be lost. He who is best located, who has the best grip on the action commands; the others must come to his rescue according to his plans; the next day, hurt pride is nursed over drinks to celebrate one another's successes.

The hierarchy is no longer there to order planned decisions and master responsibilities, but to stimulate initiative and give it the level of effort it deserved in the shortest possible time so as to grant it efficiency in a flexible maneuver never devised so far. It is a new tactical paradigm, probably that of tomorrow."

Henri Le Mire

Histoire militaire de la guerre d'Algérie (Military History of Algeria's War)
(Albin Michel, Paris 1982, page 203)

- ➔ Focus on the quality and simplicity of orders, which must be issued in a timely manner

In mission command, the commander makes fewer decisions, but must focus on the most important ones. They are transposed into plans or orders, which must include, in addition to the commander's intent:

- friendly forces situation, including adjacent units, and enemy situation, insofar as it is known;
- subordinates' missions, drafted as effects to obtain, within a set time and space;
- assets allocated to subordinates to fulfill missions, such as fire support, etc.;
- coordination measures, essential to give subordinates the scope of their actions, i.e. their freedom of initiative.

¹³ 9th Airborne Regiment.

Simplicity in form and conciseness are of the utmost importance when drafting orders. The clearer the concept of operations is, the easier it will be to achieve this simplicity.

The commander must always aim to be concise, even when current procedures, such as those in NATO, lay down frameworks for orders that tend towards exhaustiveness.

Algeria in the spring of 1958, during what was to become known as the 'Bataille du barrage,' the assets of the Constantine Eastern Zone were deployed in the following echelonment:

- "1) Four regiments are located in front of the Barrage: the 3rd REI, the 1st Half-Brigade of Chasseurs, the 153rd RIM and the 26th RIM¹⁴. They act as a covering force for the Barrage and are responsible for the first interception.*
- 2) On the Barrage itself, six armored regiments are tasked with the 'harrow' maneuver: the 31st and 18th Dragons, the 1st Moroccan Spahis, the 1st and 2nd REC¹⁵, the 1st Hussards.*
- 3) To the rear of the Barrage, the areas held by the 3rd RTS¹⁶, the 151st RIM, the 60th RI, the 152nd RIM and the 6th Moroccan Spahis are spread over the entire depth of the ground and form - because of their disposition - a genuine spider's web in which the rebel groups should be caught.*
- 4) On top of this disposition, five "free hunting" airborne battalions are located on the opponents' major routes of infiltration. There are, from the north to the south: the 1st REP, the 9th RCP, the 14th RCP, the 8th RPC and the 3rd RPC¹⁷. These five strike battalions' action is coordinated by Colonel Craplet, General Vanuxem's deputy.*

In addition, three helicopter detachments are available in Guelma, Tebessa and Bir el Ater, and air support (T6s, Corsairs, or even B-26s) is provided from Bone and Tebessa airbases."

14 3rd Foreign Legion Infantry Regiment, 153rd Mountain Infantry regiment, 26th Mountain Infantry Regiment.

15 1st & 2nd Foreign Legion Armored Regiments.

16 3rd Senegalese Troops Infantry Regiment.

17 8th & 3rd Overseas Airborne Regiment.

Colonel Buchoud, commanding officer of the 9th RCP, quotes¹⁸ the message he sent on April 23, 1958, to General Vanuxem, further to intelligence collected on the ground that invalidated information previous intelligence:

***“ALPHA:** Request you assign as soon as possible a company of the 18th Dragons to seal off the axis Souk Ahrras - Gambetta and to gather information using the Calleja outpost.*

***BRAVO:** I am tasking my armored company and a company of the 152nd RIM currently assigned to me to seal off the area between Souk Ahrras and Drea.*

***CHARLIE:** As of 06.30 my entire battalion is to deploy between Zaroura and Drea in order to search either to the west or to the east.*

***DELTA:** This action to be completed to the south by my 152nd RIM task force.*

***ECHO:** These actions to be profitably extended to the north and the south. The north part might be allocated to the 60th RI and activated by you, the south part to an element of the 152nd RIM also activated by you.*

***FOXTROT:** Orders already given to all elements of 152nd RIM. Request you to inform the 60th RI, the 18th Dragons and the 4/8^e RA¹⁹.*

Previously scheduled operation is canceled.

END OF MESSAGE - OUT.”

Apart from the rather formal wording “request you,” this is a complete order. Colonel Buchoud cancelled the initial ongoing operation, proceeded on his own initiative to conduct another action before reporting it and suggested in a rather cavalier fashion to his commanding general to integrate the battlefield disposition that he, as a commanding officer, was about to implement. For General Vanuxem, this kind of behavior was accepted, as long as the orders were clearly defined and the intent consistent with the situation.

18 Le Mire, *op cit.*, page 203.

19 8th Artillery Regiment.

As long as the commander expresses himself through a perfectly clear and well-crafted intent, he accordingly diminishes the amount of uncertainty or even mistrust in the decisions of subordinates. He is assured that they will design their own maneuvers in complete compliance with his intent. Thus, the successive intents of the various levels of command are cascaded just as Russian dolls fit into each other, in a perfectly consistent way showing clear evidence of simplicity and conciseness when drafting orders.

Stabilization operations, which are the commitments most likely to occur in the short and medium terms, favor the indirect approach and require the implementation of a comprehensive maneuver. In absolute terms, mission command grants the spirit supremacy over the letter. As such, it promotes the initiative of the subordinates and seems particularly suited to the stabilization phase, though it may also be used in the intervention phase.

PART III - APPLYING AND COMBINING THE SIX PRINCIPLES OF COMMAND

The six principles outlined below originate from the commander's intent and 'major effect,' and all contribute to:

- Strengthening consistency in the design, conduct and control of mission execution from each level of command;
- Reinforcing each subordinate level which normally reports to a single commander;
- Preserving the commander's freedom of action by making him concentrate his efforts on his own level of responsibility.

III.1 SIMPLICITY

Besides the simplicity of orders as mentioned above, this principle also applies to the development process, which is a constant battle against time. Rationalized deadlines are obtained by informing subordinates in real time of intermediate decisions that are already finalized. As such, without having to wait for complete orders to be handed down, the subordinate is aware of the major effect, the chosen course of action and the mission he is entrusted with.

The command organization must therefore strike a balance between narrow structures increasing the number of levels between the commander and the executing unit, and 'rake-shaped' organization that overloads the responsible commander.

It should be considered how many units can be reasonably controlled in operations. Napoleon, for his part, advocated five units. This estimate has changed little since then.

The principle of simplicity must also be observed in command structures themselves. They should avoid overstaffing, duplication of functions, and the temptation to follow the latest fad.

III. 2 UNITY

The principle of unity has three main aspects:

- a. For each level of responsibility there is only one level of command;
- b. For each defined time-space segment of a maneuver there is one level of command;
- c. The principle of intent as developed above ensures consistency of command with a single reference: the intent and desired end state of the higher echelon.

III. 3 PERMANENCE AND CONTINUITY

The principle of unity of command based on a clearly stated commander's intent would be irrelevant if it did not rely on a supplementary principle: continuity and permanence.

Specifically, command continuity and permanence are expressed as follows:

- a. every commander must have an *ad latus*²⁰;

Telegram from General Joffre to Mr. Millerand, Minister of War, on September 24, 1914:

“General Galliéni is currently designated as my eventual successor. However, among the army commanders, Foch has demonstrated unquestionable superiority, in terms of character and military thinking. I request that an official memorandum be sent to him, designating him as my eventual replacement. Should the government accept this proposal, I shall take the general with me, as an ad latus, to relieve part of the task which is heavier every day, and appoint his successor as Commander, 9th Army.”

Marshal Joffre

Mémoires (Memoirs)

(Plon, Paris 1932, Volume 1, pages 446 and 447)

In reality, Foch never joined GHQ, but rather proceeded to northern France where, from October 6, he became Deputy Commander-in-Chief of what would become known as the ‘Army Group North’ (*‘GAN’ in French*).

²⁰ A deputy, but with a lower rank than the incumbent.

- b. Keeping commanders in positions of significant responsibility in their assignments over time is a fair compromise between the need for mission success and the constraint associated with being worn down by a position. But in case of blatant failure, however long the commander has held command, he may be relieved should direct responsibility be proven.

As an Army Group Commander in 1944 and 1945, General Omar Bradley explained that measures for relieving commanders that he had to take were in fact aimed at consolidating the notion of the responsibility of the commander:

"[...] there were instances in Europe when I relieved commanders for their failure to move fast enough. And it is possible that there were some victims of circumstance. For how can the blame for failure be laid fairly on a single man when there are in reality so many actors that can affect the outcome of any battle? Yet each commander must always assume total responsibility for every individual in his command. If his battalion or regimental commanders fail him in the attack, then he must relieve them or be relieved himself. Many a division commander has failed, not because he lacked the capacity for command, but only because he declined to be hard enough on his subordinate commanders".

General Bradley.

A Soldier's Story, (Modern Library, 1999, page 65)

- c. Command is exercised with the same rigor regardless of the phase of the maneuver in question or its duration.

III. 4 SUBSIDIARITY AND DECENTRALIZATION

The aforementioned principles of unity and permanence/continuity may only be fully applied if each level of command enjoys the freedom of action necessary to complete its mission. To this end:

- a. Aim for optimal efficiency by encouraging the initiative of subordinate levels;
- b. Subordinate level initiative should be controlled based on systematic reports of actions undertaken;
- c. The commander must avoid interfering in subordinate level conduct of current operations at all costs (*de minimis non curat praetor*²¹). This in no way releases him from his responsibility with respect to orders given.

In November 1944, during the offensive on Strasbourg from the Vosges Mountains, Leclerc instructed Rouvillois, commanding one of the division's task forces, to bypass the Saverne pass by the north to reach the rear areas via an axis through the Vosges Mountains. The route was defined, but could be replaced by another, uncovered during the advance, free of obstacles or easier to use. Rouvillois chose the Petite Pierre pass located 20 kilometers north of the one initially selected. The outflanking maneuver succeeded fully because of his initiative, within the margin granted by Leclerc, in order to reach his objective. Once out of the mountains, it opened up the road to Strasbourg. Rouvillois's task force was the first to reach the town.

III.5 COMMAND DIALOGUE

Dialogue, both inside and outside the chain of command, is essential. This is true in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions, (combined arms, joint, international, or even interagency dimensions). The ability for directed or targeted dialogue must not be confused with 'collective command' or 'command by committee,' which is necessarily

²¹ The commander does not care about details.

unproductive. On the contrary, it is a question for the commander of broadening the scope of his decision-making parameters, thereby distancing himself and then imposing a carefully considered and feasible decision.

The desired effects of command dialogue are as follows:

- a. Vertically, to ensure prior to operations that there is unanimity among the various levels of command, and thus solidarity among players;

Pride comes before a fall, as the Imperial German Army learnt in August and September 1914, less than a month into its campaign, though initially victorious on the borders, they were defeated and forced to retreat only two weeks later. Besides misguided decisions on the part of General von Moltke, the German Chief of Staff, the main reason lay in the complete absence of physical contact and dialogue between him, far from the front at his Luxembourg headquarters, and his army commanders. Even the crucial decision to retreat was taken by one of his subordinates, Lieutenant Colonel Hentsch, who was given full command authority and sent in a mad panic on an inspection tour. This failure of German staffs is explained by Corelli Barnett, a British military historian:

“Once more Moltke was presented with the appearance of decisive victory. Once more he had to accept it. He could not discuss the victory in person with his army commanders; a bellowed telephone conversation over a bad line was no substitute for the direct contact of minds and personalities and indeed was never tried by Moltke. There remained coded telegrams and radio signals, naturally kept as brief as possible. Moltke and his battle commanders were like deaf men with poor ear trumpets trying to carry out a complex technical discussion.”

Corelli Barnett
The Swordbearers
 (Indiana University Press, 1964, Page 52)

- b. Horizontally, to ensure the necessary consistency between the various actions conducted by each echelon at its level through specialized cells;
- c. Within a multinational environment, to ensure partners understand why actions are undertaken, to ensure the consistency of these activities within the overall operational or strategic maneuver, and to take the necessary coordination, cooperation and interoperability measures while preserving national interests.

III. 6 PROXIMITY

Whatever the chosen type of command, it is important for the commander to be fully aware of the situation on the ground from his Command Post (CP). To this end:

- a. At regular intervals, he should go to where the action is taking place to see for himself the real situation and check that the perception of his Tactical Operations Center (TOC) or CP is consistent with reality. This approach is systematic at combined arms task force level and occasional at higher levels;
- b. On a permanent basis, he ensures that he has a tactical command post (TAC CP) drawn in principle from his active CP, so that he may place command focus on a particular action, or an unexpected one. He then leaves the main CP under the control of one of his deputies who continues to command and conduct other actions. Such a TAC CP is always activated for a limited time. This solution is perfectly appropriate up to brigade level, but only occasionally at higher levels;
- c. He makes his presence felt, most notably at critical times, regardless of the level concerned, and commands orally.

These six principles may be reduced to a single tenant: that of a practical mind. The commander's own skills, while not necessarily innate, must be continuously improved and combined with natural moral qualities.

PART IV - THE QUALITIES OF THE COMMANDER

As the current environment of operations becomes more complex, the tactical military commander must possess particular qualities. Though he also must abide by the fundamental ethics of normal human behavior, these are beyond the scope of this doctrinal manual. The commander in operations situation must also be able to meet a certain number of criteria. In addition to the ability to command, which is primarily understood as a natural ability to win over others, a wide range of qualities is required. Although some qualities appear more or less innate, others must be developed during time in training. Those described below are indispensable, but the list is not exhaustive.

IV. 1 COURAGE, RESPONSIBILITY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

On top of the physical courage inherent in the military profession, one must add foresight, strength and firmness of conviction which may even lead the commander to depart somewhat from the letter of his mission to better adhere to its spirit.

Furthermore, while the commander makes most decisions by relying on the staff's reflections and proposals, his intuition may bring him to take the opposite position on a decision. It is often when he is alone that the commander's courage is expressed.

In any case, whatever the origin of the order's design, the commander commits himself, not the staff, in expressing it. More specifically: this is where true intellectual courage lies.

When the situation is critical and all eyes are on him, it is important for the commander, in the midst of his loneliness, to draw from within himself the strength to make decisions, but especially to doggedly follow them through to completion. Under such circumstances, the commander always sets an example for his subordinates.

IV.2 THE GIFT OF INTUITION

Procedures for decision-making do exist and are used regularly. These are, however, mere 'tool kits' for the staff's benefit, and at its level.

Nevertheless, the commander must maintain his freedom of judgment and freedom to make decisions while taking into account his staff's proposals, but primarily following his own inclination provided by his own intuition. As such, the recognized legitimacy of any commander is based on the proven pertinence of his intuition.

Intuition is an intrinsic human personality quality and an integral part of any skill. It is only developed and maintained by continuous, lengthy personal reflection and, in many cases, even before being vested with one's first responsibilities as commander of a company (or troop or battery). This preliminary work, which must be maintained throughout a career, aims to retain and then internalize a certain number of examples of situations which make it possible in times of crisis to respond very quickly and avoid past errors.

General Beaufre, who had long been part of General de Lattre's inner circle, described in an article published in the *Revue militaire d'information ('RMI')* de Lattre's intuitive personal approach. It should be noted that Marshal Juin, who had long been presented as the polar opposite of de Lattre, operated similarly.

"Confronted with a problem, General de Lattre, far from aiming at an overall theoretical solution, would begin by exploring what was possible. He would do this as he did everything, which is to say with passion. First, he would inquire carefully, not by reading files, of course, but through conversations, discussions with those who might know. His concern was direct, 'on the ground' information. In so doing, he would keep the radio antennas of his intuition wide open, he would listen, try to find answers, he would grope in the dark, because beneath his haughty veneer, the man was modest and doubted his judgment until an inner revelation showed him the way.

After this exploration of what was possible, the development phase would begin. Here, his method was truly personal: he would prepare this phase by selecting carefully those around him. It was with them that, collectively, he would gradually mature a decision."

General Beaufre
Le Général de Lattre
 (Revue militaire d'information, 1962 / 2)

IV. 3 THE ABILITY TO WIN CONFIDENCE

The commander must be keen to achieve and maintain a climate of trust and mutual understanding towards his subordinates, his higher commanders, his neighbors and allies as well as his non-military partners.

IV.3.1 The Confidence of His Subordinates

In the same way, it is advisable to gain, foster and maintain a climate of trust with respect to subordinates. It relies on the certainty that they have fully grasped the spirit of the mission; they have been convinced of its merits and are sure to have a free hand to select the appropriate courses of action. That is why the notion of control, the result of the 'back brief' practiced in the English-speaking world, is paramount and should not be considered a sign of mistrust, but rather a legitimate and essential step of the iterative MDMP.

The example of General Duchêne, relieved as Commander, 6th Army, after the crushing defeat at Chemin des Dames on May 27, 1918, was, because of the effects of his bad character on those around him, a typical example of the commander in whom the staff has so little confidence that it is inhibited.

"All the criticisms of General Duchêne related to his troublesome character - a foul mood, a permanent growl, stormy rebuffs, at once foul language in his mouth for no reason. Addressing him became a torture for his officers which they only ventured to do as a last resort. His chief of staff, forced to bear the brunt of his bursts of anger, would sulk for days when he had really gone too far. One could hardly believe such things, but it seemed that it was literally incredible. The officer who told me about him described the dismal meals at the General's table: He was sullen and grumbling, the chief of staff, one elbow on the table, pointedly turning his back on his General and never uttering a word while the rest of the entourage was terrified. In the headquarters rooms, the same feeling of distress would prevail. An officer went up to a department head: 'Sir, what do we do in this matter? What do we do? I couldn't care less! Go and ask the General! I wanted to find out this morning, he told me I was a pain in the a...! I'm not going back, that's for sure!'



What was the outcome? There was an embittered staff, always at loggerheads, not daring to take responsibility. These men, most of whom were of substance, were discouraged and had no desire to work; they were afraid that their efforts might not be rewarded, still trembling at the thought of a sudden outburst which would fall on them like an ant. On the rare occasions when the irascible commander consented to show self-restraint, he displayed an ease of understanding, a gift for clarity, a talent finally, which went so well with his confident bearing and soldier's handsome, proud face."

Quoted by Pierrefeu
GQ.G Secteur 1 (GHQ Sector 1)
 (Édition française illustrée, Volume 2, Paris 1920, Page 170)

IV.3.2 The Confidence of Higher Commanders

The effective implementation of a 'mission command' style is based on mutual understanding and trust. With respect to the commander's higher echelon, it is a question of showing full understanding of its intent, or the spirit of the mission, and complete adherence to it. The margin of initiative granted depends directly on the quality of relations with higher echelons.

Commanding the 4th Army in 1914, General de Langle de Cary was always completely loyal to Joffre. He nevertheless criticized in his posthumously published diaries the absence of dialogue and excessive centralization that Joffre displayed towards his army group commanders due to a lack of confidence. Foch and Castelnau, both future army commanders, openly and officially voiced similar complaints at their levels.

"The operation plan was the sole work of General Joffre and his staff. It was not submitted for review and assessment by the Supreme Council of War. Most army commanders - including me - only knew where our armies' concentration areas were located. We knew nothing about our commander-in-chief's intents.





That was his way of operating, with the sole help of his closest entourage, without consulting his army commanders, without even letting them know what was going on, other than by the instructions and orders he sent them. I am not criticizing, but I think one should favor the method which is based on collaboration and trust. It would not diminish whatsoever the authority of the supreme commander, to whom alone the decision belongs."

General de Langle de Cary
Souvenirs de commandement (Memories of Command)
 (Payot, Paris 1935, Page 171)

IV.3.3 The Confidence of Neighbors and Allies

The relations that the commander maintains with neighbors, in order to accomplish missions, are particularly important in a multinational environment. Given the various languages, cultures and military doctrines, it is highly desirable to know exactly the spirit in which the neighbor in question plans to conduct the mission received and vice versa.

On August 23, 1914, although he disagreed with both the principle and the opportunity, General Lanrezac, commanding the 5th Army, attacked General Bülow's army alongside the Sambre River at Charleroi, in accordance with Joffre's orders. The attack would fail on that very same day. Placed in an unfavorable ratio of forces and clearly perceiving the threat of his troops being rolled up by General von Klück's army, Lanrezac decided to withdraw immediately. He reported it to the General Headquarters, which approved his decision, aware that his left wing's withdrawal would lead to that of the entire French Army. In doing so, Lanrezac failed to notify General French, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) commander. The British Army, deployed to the 5th Army's left, was thus exposed by this withdrawal.



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On August 24, it was fiercely attacked by von Klück and defeated at Mons. French, whose relations with Lanrezac had never been very cordial since the beginning of the campaign, blamed this failure on the fact that the 5th Army had withdrawn without him being notified. It was only thanks to the tactical skills of General Sordet, Commander of the Cavalry Corps, that French could temporarily break contact and withdraw. Wary of his neighbor on the right, from then on French would always be 24 hours ahead of him in any withdrawal maneuver. These poor relations led to a lack of communication between the two armies on the Allied left wing and would also be one of the principal reasons for the sudden relief of Lanrezac from command on September 3, as Joffre needed a close-knit left wing to lead what would come to be known as the Battle of the Marne.

IV.3.4 The Confidence of Non-Military Players

Establishing and maintaining reliable relations with other players in the theater of operations is essential, especially as the crisis settlement process is now comprehensive and is in any case beyond the sole control of the military. However, it is advisable to place this type of relations under the guise of partnership, rather than being perceived to 'impose.' Real, formalized leadership in comprehensive crisis management remains an unresolved issue, and therefore the effectiveness of common action is largely based on the quality of relations.

IV. 4 AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE GENERAL INTEREST

The full meaning of this quality is to be considered in both its intellectual and moral aspects. It commits the commander to his subordinates as well as to his commanders at higher echelons.

- a. At the intellectual level, in order to preserve the spirit of the mission, the commander must very quickly grasp actions already under way, but also permit his actions to fall into the continuum established by his predecessor so as to maintain consistency. This attitude prohibits

looking for 'media stunts,' which are fleeting in nature and often counterproductive in the medium and long terms.

- b. At the moral, common sense level, the issue is fundamental honesty which means serving institutions, and not living off them.

In 1808, Napoleon decided to depose the King of Spain for political as well as dynastical reasons. This led to the deployment of an expeditionary force to 'support' the operation. However, with public opinion among the Spanish population already strongly against the French presence, the generals, including Junot, behaved as if they owned the country, looting, ransacking and grabbing as much as they could, including the wealth of religious institutions. As a consequence, Napoleon was soon faced with a full-scale guerrilla war, supported and financed by London. He never would manage to subdue the rebellion, with the notable exception of the pacifying action conducted by General Suchet in Aragon. While it is true that the Spanish campaign is regarded as the graveyard of the Grande Armée, it was more due to the behavior of his predatory roughneck generals than to Napoleon.

- c. Although ambition based on real and recognized qualities remains legitimate; ruthlessness, with or without bullying, can quickly become reprehensible.

IV. 5. PERSUASION AND CREDIBILITY

Already noticeable at a time when armed forces were purely national and relied on conscription to fill the ranks, the requirement to gain the confidence of one's subordinate is even more obvious in the current coalition environment. It would be unrealistic to believe that the sensibilities related to the preservation of national interests could be overcome solely by enforcing formal discipline based on the dissemination of orders. To be accepted as the legitimate commander, he must ensure that the 'coalition partner'/subordinate is willing to consider received orders as perfectly legitimate. This is why multinational command always resorts to persuasion, relying heavily on the commander's credibility and ability to persuade.

General Sarrail's aforementioned aphorism concerning Napoleon is often incorrectly attributed to Marshal Foch. It was nevertheless true that Foch, as Supreme Commander of the Allied Armies in 1918, always advocated persuasion as the sole method of command, though this hardly corresponded to his character.

“A single command, particularly when it must be exerted on commanders of another nation, of another race, cannot be imposed by decree. Only the man entrusted with its conduct can impose it, acting through influence over those with whom he must cooperate [...]. When all is said and done, my idea amounts to this: when command is exerted over Allied forces, curt, imperative, categorical orders produce no results. He who gives them must make the person to whom he is talking accept them fully, he must win confidence, support. There is no other way to command [...]. When forces fight together, it is absolutely impossible to achieve unity of command other than through moral influence. In other words, persuasion brings results, not duress.

What is the point of giving orders when for all kinds of practical and moral reasons, they cannot be executed? Men, especially foreigners, must be taken as they are, and not as we wish they were.”

In Recouly
Le mémorial de Foch (Foch's Memorial)
 (Éditions de France, Paris 1929, Pages 15 to 24)

Beyond the ability to persuade, the commander's credibility must be preserved by striking the right balance between respect of rank and recognized abilities²². This nature of formal hierarchy is emphasized in multinational environments, particularly in NATO, where a nation's relative weight is directly linked to the rank of its highest representative.

²² This quality is not discussed here. The concept is fully developed in the doctrinal manual mentioned in the introduction.

IV. 6 DISCERNMENT

If a discerning nature is an individual disposition of mind to assess things clearly and soundly, then the commander must maintain his own capacities for reflection, analysis and assessment as intact as possible. He must remain clear-headed, not become overworked, screen how much information he receives, delegate effectively, keep physically fit and keep his spirits high.

He must not fall into the trap of being too consumed by his work and maintaining a distance from the events in hand. There is a second expression of discernment: a true commander does not always comply in principle with the views of others. He preserves and smoothly displays his assessment capabilities, even when initially opposed to the common or majority opinion because he has his own objective evidence. His discerning nature in this case is consistent with his ability to convince. Of course, this state of mind should be confused neither with stubbornness nor with intellectual isolation.

This is why, on May 13, 1944, having tasked the 2nd DIM²³ with the assault on Mount Majo from the Garigliano River, without any artillery preparation so as to preserve surprise, and having noted the failure of the attack, Marshal Juin would relaunch the attack the following day after powerful artillery preparation, once he had listened to the assessment of all battalion commanders concerned, all of whom had expressed the same view. The attack was a success.

In 1917, having planned a new offensive that was to take place on the *Chemin des Dames* between Soissons and Reims, General Nivelle refused to accept that German withdrawal from the Péronne Salient towards the Hindenburg Line might challenge the effects expected from it. When the first reports suggesting as much from General Franchet d'Espèrey reached him, he is reported to have said:

“Such a withdrawal movement is impossible! Franchet d'Espèrey is wrong.”

23 2nd Infantry Division of Moroccan Troops.

IV. 7 SERENITY

In addition to these qualities, the commander must strive to reassure his entourage and subordinates in tense situations. They can then give their best without feeling pressure brought about by the operational situation or from higher echelons. By 'absorbing' as much anguish as he releases serenity, he contributes to reducing overall stress and reestablishes as much as possible a quiet, dispassionate and soothing atmosphere. He not only protects himself and retains his capacity for discernment mentioned above, but also makes himself credible to those around him and lends strength to his decisions.

The balance of command systems is second only to the balance and serenity that the commander must favor in a very full agenda, in order to avoid being overwhelmed with work. In his own way, General Juin did this very well when he commanded the French Expeditionary Corps in Italy ('CEFI' in French) in 1943-1944.

"Throughout April (1944), at his Santa Arunca CP, in their tents and trailers, General Juin's staff worked in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. At 7am, a staff meeting would take place with the senior officers heading a cell gathered around the 'Boss', then each one would work alone. Juin would have one or the other of his subordinates come to his trailer to ask them for information. Major Pedron, from the G3 cell, would go there more often than the others. He had a privileged role, having worked for the General for a long time.

They did not have to spell things out to each other and he would know better than anyone how to interpret and translate the General's thoughts in writing. At the mess, the mood would be joyous; one would rally around comrades, liaison officers of the various major units. In the evening, after dinner, Juin would organize a game of bridge: This was how he unwound. Standing orders were: 'If nothing serious happens, then let me sleep.'"

Colonel Pujo
Juin, Maréchal de France (Juin, marshal of France)
 [Albin Michel, Paris 1988, Page 187]

Depending on the situation with which he is confronted, the context and environment in which he operates and his own personality, the commander shows at any given time all or some of these qualities. They must, however, be among the basic traits of a commander's character, regardless of the phase of the operation or chosen type of command.

To this end, as character is determined and not predestined, it is important that future commanders' moral and intellectual education should emphasize these qualities from initial training and throughout their military education.

CONCLUSION

COMMANDING IN OPERATIONS TODAY MEANS ADAPTING AT ALL COSTS TO CURRENT REQUIREMENTS OF ENGAGEMENTS WITHOUT FORGETTING THE FUNDAMENTALS OF MILITARY DISCIPLINE

It is true that the forms and styles of command and control in land warfare have evolved parallel to the art of war and collective military mentalities and cultures. However, on the ground, where 'frictions' and the 'fog of war' prevail, regardless of the tactical level, the commander is the only one who directs, decides and takes responsibility. In this sense, command remains timeless and is not subjected to the vagaries and vicissitudes of tactical, technical and human changes to the maneuver. The commander remains a military professional and leader of men, either determined or restrained depending on the situation.

The current and rather complex environment of land operations, as depicted in doctrinal manual FT-01, tends therefore to focus on mission command. It is a style of command in which the commander issues his intent first, in order to give his subordinates an appropriate margin of initiative, while ensuring they are still under his control. Although it is appropriate for employment of coercive actions, it is also particularly suited to stabilization, when dispositions are stretched over large areas and sustained over the long term.

Within this context, the main effort takes priority and increases the importance of coordination at all levels, where lower tactical levels conduct the majority of the actions in contact with the enemy. The role of the commander is a major one; not only at the top, but at all levels of the chain of command.

Finally, the principles of command and control as well as the qualities of the commander that are described in this document should never let anyone forget that discipline remains one of the soldier's main virtues. While this doctrinal manual emphasizes intellectual discipline, which grants the spirit supremacy over the letter, the formal aspects of discipline remain unchanging. Every officer invested with a command in operations is duty-bound to establish and maintain this discipline among his subordinates and to abide by it as well.

“Never could we have done what we did had the Army’s general staffs not remained rock-solid in the midst of the storm, spreading clarity and composure around them, surrounding their commanders - on whom the most important responsibilities weighed - with an atmosphere of healthy and young trust, which supported and helped them, remaining - in the most exhausting labor and throughout a terrible moral ordeal - clear-headed, flexible and demonstrating a skill of execution from which victory would arise.”

Marshal Joffre

Extract from his acceptance speech at the Académie Française, (1918)

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