

C.D.E.F



Realities shatter; today they bring us back from virtual warfare and its perfect vision of the transparent space of battles on scopes to terrain requirements. A new awareness is taking place.

Because the end result of armed engagement changes, their conditions transform themselves: from the simple obviousness of the known enemy, material targets, strategic visions, military objectives and open spaces, we are switching to the uncertainties of the permanently changing chameleon opponent, of the human environment, of combat occurring in immaterial battlefields, of low level tactical micro-actions and partitioned spaces. Today, it is no longer the case of organizing the success of the common action of a limited number of units acting against an identified opponent carrying out a finalized action, but of seeing to it that the combination of the actions of a great number of small teams concurs to the success of the whole, although they are acting in a very decentralized manner, facing a badly known enemy, in a discontinued area of operation. The "contested areas"¹ where land engagements take place today are marked by a great physical and human heterogeneity; where the information superiority is of less importance, where communication systems show their limits, whilst the physical and human roughness of the environments renders observation and interpretation difficult. For a great part and in a way, intelligence has switched from an objective nature to a subjective one. Yesterday, focus was placed on collecting concrete information and the intelligence general picture could fairly easily present itself under the format of tables, organization charts and sketches; now, the real objective of intelligence is intentions that cannot easily anymore be derived from situations.

Under those conditions, it is an understatement to say that the intelligence function has increased its importance as well as its complexity. It is an understatement to say that the equipment and the systems of systems

conceived for the past conditions are now often insufficient, sometimes out of date, despite all their modernity and their technology. It is a revolution and one must discuss about it. Today, not taking its dimension into consideration would lead our forces to fight blindly tomorrow, only able to react against an opponent having the initiative and, from this standpoint, all the useful information for its punctual action. Obviousness imposes itself: the mutation of the military action entails a parallel evolution of intelligence. General Fast, commanding the US Army intelligence school clearly states it²: "The operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have imposed a re-balancing of an approach centered 'upon sensors' towards a system firstly aiming at providing an optimized direct support to those who need the most information: the soldier and the small unit commander".

Globally, the issue is complex: what was necessary yesterday remains so for a great deal - as one must still be prepared for conventional warfare if one wants to push back its occurrence - but now come in addition new requirements for a new type of conflicts in which our land forces are engaged for a long time. The new adversary appears as being more and more difficult to detect, therefore difficult to locate, therefore much less possibly subject to accurate strikes. Yesterday, the essential part of the military action was destruction and intelligence consisted primarily in target intelligence whilst, now, the essential part lies in the situation awareness and intelligence, the perception of micro-situations and micro-objects; "*the transparency of the battlefield*" appears to be a more and more erroneous good theoretical idea. Yesterday, we thought we fought "thanks to" information; we realize today that we are more and more condemned to fight "for" information.

The priority of levels swings over: strategy gives precedence to tactic and we are switching from a "top down" approach to a "down towards top" approach where troops at contact give the multitude of uncertain terrain indications from which the operative synthesis will be built. As a result, processes and layouts reverse themselves, the low tactical echelons must imperatively be reinforced with acquisition assets and analysis capabilities; as a result, digitization must thought over again as, in this domain, it had been conceived for the conventional warfare of the past and now brings much less than when we were thinking of carrying warfare against material targets.

¹ BG Robert E. Schmidle & LCL Franck G. Hoffman, "*Commanding the Contested Zones*", *Proceedings*, September 2004.

² See "*Foreign Studies*" columns, page 52.

The “fog of warfare” has become thicker again on the battlefield. The US Army, directly confronted in Iraq to the new conflict reality, today realizes that there is an obvious risk of knowing more and more about friendly forces and in proportion less and less about the enemy; it feels the risk, at the now tactical prevailing level, of the impossibility of merging computerized “blue” picture - always exact and accurate - with the “red” picture - always inaccurate and out of time. This leads it to naturally doubt about the COP (*Common Operational Picture*), which it now differentiates from the ROP, or “*Real Operational Picture*”, although the whole system is not yet stabilized.

In the same way, the concept of precision action keeps its pertinence as the efficiency of action within human environments to which is compelled the land forces soldier, requires to avoid uncertain actions and human collateral damages that ruin very quickly the patient work of conquering hearts and minds. But this sort of precision action can only be built upon intelligence acquired by men and about men: and we see there all the new and important place that not only HUMINT will have but also the action of scout units and of the common sensors that all the soldiers are. Our Anglo-Saxon friends rightly assert: “*Every soldier a Sensor*”. The present operational environment undoubtedly underlines the soldier’s role in the intelligence process³. Inexorably also, the idea that one can no longer be content with “thinking about the adversary”: it is necessary to “think as the adversary”. The adversary is not inert, he is not a simple subject for planning; endowed with a creative and free mind, he has no intention of thinking like us and to give in to our views. One really has to place oneself in the adversary’s shoes; facing the Iraqi difficulties, the Anglo-Saxon have understood that and they have created “red cells” within their operational staffs and developed courses in which one is taught to think “as the adversary”.

Conflicts of today, conflicts of tomorrow, will be better conducted if they are really conceived as intelligence and information operations and not as maneuvers or processes of destruction... Therefore, an intellectual, but also human and material effort has to be made in favor of intelligence, and this will imply re-balances between the contact/destruction functions and the intelligence function, with most probably the availability of significant intelligence organic assets at brigade level⁴. Beyond unfruitful debates about the respective roles of specialists and of non-specialists, beyond the purely technical visions focused on equipments and networks, an in-depth thinking has to be carried out about our capabilities as well as about our methods and our courses of action in order to place our objectives and available assets in sync.

If our ambition in future engagements is to employ limited force able to set the basis for the accomplishment of the strategic goal, undoubtedly we probably have to accept to have a limited action capability of rethought force for the benefit of a more complete and re-oriented reconnaissance and intelligence capability warranting an efficient, targeted and mastered employment of the armed force, necessary for the new military efficiency.

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³ On this subject see *Lessons Learned article (RETEX)* by *generals Fast and Le Bot* as well as the *article* by *general Fleury*.

⁴ Simple example, but meaningful example. The future new structure of the FCS brigades (US Army) is now known; there will be one scouts cavalry troop, in addition to one intelligence company and one recon and acquisition battalion organic to each of the three combined arms battalions task forces.