

C.D.E.F



The security of citizens is the very first mission of a State. But security must be understood as a whole: today, internal security is achieved as much outside as inside the national territory. Therefore, for the security of its citizens and the preservation of its interests, France needs to have a defense tool able to act outside its borders as the world evolution imposes a **“forward defense”** capability, but this must be a useful defense allowing it to effectively achieve on the ground the political effects it is looking for. First, this **“useful defense”** relies upon **prevention** and its various aspects, including deterrence - which should also be multi-dimensional - which is not the least aspect. It also relies, if the crisis cannot be prevented, upon the **stabilization** of the conflict areas that will enable a return to normal living conditions and the suppression of the sources of violence before it spreads further - due to contagion or metastasis - and starts to threaten our own security.

When thinking further about this, one notices that today stabilization has a twofold dimension. First of all, it asserts itself as a **real strategic function** of its own and in itself, an aim of the action outside one's borders; in this respect, it could very well become one of the few **essential strategic functions** that would be selected in a possible future White Paper. Then today, it is considered as the essential tactical phase of the interventions of the French armed forces outside the national territory. This is the one we are concerned with in this issue.

This phase is essential. It is essential because it is during this phase that the strategic and political success or failure of the military interventions decided by the government is achieved. In the same way that one speaks about the “main effect” when reasoning tactically, one can speak of “main effort” or “essential phase”, in the sense that success during this phase “warrants the overall success of the intervention” as well as the “achievement of the main effect warrants the success of the tactical maneuver”. The Army Chief of Staff was very clear on this point on October 18 2006: for him, **“the idea of a decisive battle is not as pertinent as it was before. It is now the stabilization phase of the ground space that focuses the main effort”**.

Therefore, one can see that stabilization, globally speaking, is a strategic objective as well as a strategic effect and that, when analyzed at tactical level, **it proves to be the very essential phase, the decisive phase, i.e. the one that “wins the day”** of the strategic result and allows the achievement of the political effect.

Of course it doesn't come out from the blue as it follows the intervention phase that, thanks to the often violent introduction of an armed force, is aiming at imposing a temporary order. This indispensable temporary order will have to be exploited as soon as possible thanks to and for the stabilization. It is easy to realize that the success of stabilization will very closely depend upon the conditions in which this first indispensable phase - but only the preparatory one - of the intervention was conducted and that, therefore, this latter one must be conceived in accordance with the stabilization phase and in the manner it is intended to be carried out.

This stabilization phase is complex, as far from being a river with a flow that consistently regulates itself as time goes by, it is basically hybrid and entails coercive and violence mastering periods and also high and low intensity ones. As noted by the Army Chief of Staff on October 19 2006 at the Ecole militaire in Paris: **“stabilization doesn't mark the beginning of a period of peace, on the contrary it is a period of confrontation in all the military and civilian fields. This is why one must be careful not to reason based upon a linear evolution of the situation. The storm can follow quietness without notice”**. It is also hybrid because success can only be constructed thanks to the convergence of various “courses of action” - the “conventional” military course of action being only one of its components - and thanks to the complementarity of joint actions but above all inter-ministry ones. Again for the Army Chief of Staff, **“it is the maneuver, i.e. the combination of military and civilian assets that is the only one producing the effects allowing the neutralization or the discredit of armed groups that offers prospects to population groups”<sup>1</sup>**.

All this obliges. We will not carry out successfully the present and most likely operations in the future without undergoing a very serious reflection and adaptation effort. The effort to conduct is significant. It will have to deal with all the various factors that make up, for a modern army, the new operational capabilities of the land forces to which the world and the conflict evolutions have given back a really central role as far as the capability of the State to ensure the security of France and the defense of its interests is concerned.

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