

Leadership Challenges for Joint Force Commanders during the Transition from a High-intensity to a Low-intensity Conflict

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Abstract

A Joint Force Commander (JFC) leading military joint operations faces several complex challenges. The purpose of this article is to investigate some of the challenges a Joint Force Commander may face when a conflict changes character from being a high-intensity conflict to becoming a low-intensity conflict. Sources of evidence: In connection with command and control, especially issues concerning different cultures and the understanding of this can be the biggest challenge for a Joint Force Commander during the transition to a low intensity conflict as a peace support operation setting. Main argument: Being able to anticipate some of these problems will be essential to a Joint Force Commander's ability to exercise leadership and command and control. Conclusions: Furthermore, target selection and information operations have proven to be two factors that will have a greater importance in the planning and conduct of operations during a transition from a high-intensity conflict to a low-intensity conflict.

Keywords: Military leadership; Military; Joint operations; High-intensity conflict; Low-intensity conflict; Command and control; Target selection; Information operations

Introduction

A Joint Force Commander (JFC) leading a military joint operation must face several and often highly complex challenges. The challenges facing military leaders at various levels vary widely. Leadership at a strategic level is not the same as leadership at a tactical level. Leadership at a tactical level will often involve interpersonal relations between a leader and a team member, as well as a direct form of cooperation and communication. The style of leadership at the strategic level will tend to be more indirect, relying on background documents, frame allocations and representations [1]. A JFC faces multi-faceted leadership challenges between the tactical and strategic level. These challenges are not to be taken lightly.

When the conflict changes from being a high-intensity conflict to becoming a low-intensity conflict, new challenges will arise. Many different factors a JFC will have to consider will thus change character. Low-intensity conflict is a comprehensive term covering for instance peace support operations [2]. The term covers low-intensity conflicts ranging from guerrilla warfare, terrorism, insurgency war, and asymmetric warfare to operations that intend to address these forms of warfare. One problem with recent low intensity conflicts is that there are many actors involved in a theater of operations. Identifying the different characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a nation, an alliance, a military force or other grouping derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight will pose a great challenge for military leaders [3].

In addition, as the "end-state" or final state might lie quite far into the future. This may lead to the consequence that as time passes the final state becomes difficult to deal with. It may also be difficult to reach the end-state. By identifying the actors' objectives and the

desired end-state, a military leader (JFC) can define an end-state, that is, what should be achieved when a joint operation has been completed. In this way, the concept of end-state will be important in order to obtain direction and focus in the planning and the actual completion of an operation.

The overarching supporting documents describing the Norwegian military's leadership is the Norwegian Armed Forces Chief of Defense's Policy on Leadership in the Armed Forces [1] and the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine (NAFJOD) [2,4]. These documents establish mission command (oppdragsbasert ledelse in Norwegian) as the Norwegian Armed Forces basic leadership philosophy. Mission command can be traced back to the end of the 19th century, with the Prussian concept of Auftragstaktik invented by the Prussian general Von Moltke the elder [5].

There are a number of challenges that any JFC faces. This article will be limited to discuss the North Atlantic Treaty organization (NATO) forces during the transition from high-intensity conflict to a low-intensity conflict in the context of a Crisis Response Operation with a focus on Peace Support Operations. Furthermore, this type of operation will be discussed on a general level. Specific examples of operations will be provided. This is to further shed light on the theme that is discussed in the present article. A further limitation in the article is the use of NATO definitions, although some peace support operations are carried out under the auspices of the UN. This is due to the article's focus on NATO publications.

This article will be limited to discussing the two most important factors, that is, target selection and information operations. The reason that these two factors to a greater extent than other factors are important is that they change meaning when a conflict changes its nature and the context of a low-intensity conflict with emphasis on Peace Support Operations. The reason why they change their importance is the increasing degree of complexity in a Peace Support Operation means in relation to a high-intensity conflict.

As an example of the massive impact information operations can have in more modern conflict types, the conflict between the United States and Vietnam will be mentioned in this article. It has been argued that the United States lost this conflict because they failed to thwart their opponents and their own media's use of information. This meant that they had to pull out of Vietnam [6]. Another example of the same is the conflict between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan in the years 1979-1989. Although the Soviet Union was militarily superior it lost the conflict. The reason for this was that the Soviet Union failed to transfer its power without having had to resort to full-scale war. Few countries seem to be willing to commit to a full-scale war today. This means that often militarily strong nations become handicapped when it comes to affect the desired policy objectives. A more thoughtful use of information operations could possibly make an important contribution to achieve the desired objectives [7].

We will firstly define the key concepts appearing in this article. Thereafter an explanation will be given of the JFCs challenges of command and control during the transition from a high-intensity conflict to a low-intensity conflict. Then two key factors of importance for the planning and conduct of operations and how they change at the transition from a high-intensity conflict to a low-intensity conflict will be discussed. These two factors are respectively target selection and information operations. However, exercising good and effective military leadership is a very comprehensive subject and will not be discussed in full in this article. Finally, we will present a short conclusion of some of the challenges facing a JFC when the conflict changes from being a high-intensity conflict to becoming a low-intensity conflict.

Definitions of Concepts

Military leadership

Leadership has probably been written about, formally researched, and informally discussed more than any other single topic [8]. Leadership is also a subject that has long excited interest among people [9]. Military leadership is about the leader's characteristics and behavior, and the interaction between leaders and subordinates. Besides this, a number of external factors exist. External factors are system variables such as organizational structure, situation, context, and coincidences, may affect the leadership [1]. This means that leaders in cooperation with subordinates, in a targeted manner structures, organizes, influences and legitimates the business. In our case, the business is the joint operation.

Leadership is needed, as it is leadership that aims the gun so that the team can pull the trigger [10]. Effective leadership is exercised in cooperation with and in relation to others. Leadership can thus be described as a result of the interaction between the leader and their subordinates over time [2]. Leadership can further be understood as the process that creates a common direction, alignment and commitment in a military unit [1,11]. However, leadership is seen as a being highly context dependent [12]. This means that a leader's behavior and efficiency will be the result of interaction between individual factors and the environment [13], where different situation variables are crucial for what constitute an effective leadership [1]. Military leadership can thus be described as a continuous process that is exercised in relation to others in a specific military context.

According to the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine (NAFJOD) leadership is an activity where you in different

ways try to achieve goals through others. In a military sense, leadership is formally based on the authority of command delegated to military commanders for directing, coordinating and controlling military operations [4]. We acknowledge that this is not an easy task to perform. Especially in joint operations where all military services and also other civilian actors are involved. In conducting joint operations, the JFC will also spend much time on coordination and integration with sibling headquarters and civilian leaders [14].

Command and control

Command and control (C2) is defined in The Norwegian Chief of Defence's Policy on Leadership in the Armed Forces as one of the basic functions and the military term for the planning and management of operations [1]. C2 consists of the organization, processes, procedures and systems that make military commanders able to direct and control the force. According to NAFJOD from 2014, the purpose of command and control is twofold. Firstly, for facilitating the accomplishment of operational goals in an effective and expedient way. Secondly, C2 shall safeguard the society's need for assigning authority and place responsibility [14]. C2 is based on the leadership philosophy of mission command.

The Norwegian Armed Forces Doctrine for Land Operations (FDLO) with reference to the Land Forces Tactical Doctrine, also known as ATP -35 (B) defines the term command as follows: "command is the process by which the commander impresses his will and intentions upon subordinates. It encompasses authority and responsibility of deploying forces to fulfill his mission" [15]. Moreover, with the same reference to ATP -35 (B), the concept of control is defined in the FDLO as follows: "control is the process which the commander, assisted by his staff, directs and coordinates the activities of the forces allocated" [15].

Joint force commander and high-and low-intensity conflicts

A JFC has the authority to exercise command or operational control over a joint force [2,16]. High-intensity conflicts can be defined as conflicts in which states' existence is at stake, and in which the whole society will be organized against the war. Low-intensity conflicts are defined as political- military battles with the intent to win political, military, social, economic, or psychological objectives [2]. Traditional use of military up to the level below using regular forces is a common characteristic in a low-intensity conflict [17].

Crisis response operations and peace support operations

Crisis Response Operations is defined in the Allied Joint Publication 3.4.1 [18] as NATO activities that fall outside the objectives of Article 5 operations that deal with collective defense. Crisis Response Operations is part of the term "Non - Article 5 Crisis Response Operations" (NA5CRO) [19]. Operations that supports peace is adopted in MC 327/2 (the NATO Military Policy for Non - Article 5 Crisis Response Operations) as an aspect of NA5CRO [19], and is normally known as Peace Support Operations [18]. Peace Support Operations can be divided into several types of operations: Peacekeeping, peace enforcement, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace building and humanitarian operations [18]. Another definition of Peace Support Operations (PSO) is found in the Allied Joint Publication 3.4.1 [18]. Peace Support Operations is here defined as "multi-functional operations, conducted impartially, normally in support of an internationally recognised organisation such as the UN

or Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), involving military forces and diplomatic and humanitarian agencies. PSOs are designed to achieve a long-term political settlement or other specified conditions. PSOs include peacekeeping and peace enforcement, as well as conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace building and humanitarian relief" [18].

Peace support operations are defined as those operations which will assist in managing crises and armed conflicts, and that is authorized by the United Nations (UN) Charter Chapter VI or VII. The concept of peace support operations is also used to describe a category of the military's international operations. In these operations, the main purpose is to stabilize the situation between two or more parties, and the overall level of conflict is lower than fighting against irregular and regular forces. It should be said that both types of conflict can occur within a peace support operation. UN and NATO operate with the following categorization of peace support operations: preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peace building, peacemaking and peace enforcement [2].

Command and control challenges in the transition from a high-intensity conflict to a low-intensity conflict

The Allied Joint Publication 01 describes that all operations generally have the same approach [20]. This is due to the fact that NATO should be able to handle a full spectrum of operations from total war to humanitarian operations. In a Peace Support Operation setting the operational intensity, political constraints, ROE, mandate, and the number of participants will vary and this will provide more challenges for the JFC. ROE is an abbreviation and stands for "rules of engagement" and serves as a guideline for how things should be handled by the military force. An important factor for the JFC is to take into account the factors that may hinder the success in a Peace Support Operation setting [18]. The challenges that are added to the JFC in the transition to a low-intensity conflict in the context of a Peace Support Operation setting will partly be attributed to lack of support from the international community, and perhaps the lack of support from the local population in the operational area.

In addition, the lack of support from the leaders of the actors involved in the conflict could pose a major challenge. Further challenges to the JFC may be tensions between pure combat operations and the operations performed in a Peace Support Operation setting. Krulak [21] introduced the term "three block war" in the late 1990s. Three block war describes the need for the flexibility of military forces. This is true in an operation, and not only between different operations. The three-block war means that within three blocks one might find oneself simultaneously involved in both war full-scale stabilization operations, and humanitarian assistance. In this case, it is essential that the JFC exercises good end effective military leadership.

Challenges regarding cultural aspects in the transition from a high-intensity conflict to a low-intensity conflict

A JFC will also have to consider cultural aspects, i.e. the cultural environment that characterizes both the conflict zone, but also cultural differences between the participating nation's forces. In 2006, NATO consisted of 26 different member countries [22]. Recently, Montenegro was the last country to join the NATO, summing up the member states of NATO to a total of 29 countries [23]. These 29 countries are probably very different in terms of culture and attitudes. Van Creveld [24] argues that the hardest thing for a force commander is dealing

with people involved in the conflict, both internal forces and other actors. This is because with an increased focus on people and not on military standard techniques the level of uncertainty will increase in a Peace Support Operation setting. This view is supported by von Porat Erichsen and Kvarving [25] in their book on military operations. They point out that different cultures can create a lot of challenges related to the conduct of military operations. The JFCs ability to exercise good and effective military leadership based upon a solid understanding of different cultures thus becomes an important factor for success.

In addition, the complexity of a Peace Support Operation is much more complex than in a high-intensity conflict under Article 5, and the participating nations tend to have national caveats, i.e. limitations on what each nation can do in order to accomplish the mission [18]. To be able to ensure that the peace support force will act impartially and neutrally may also become a major challenge for the JFC in a PSO setting. It has been shown that even if a Peace Support Operation force perceive themselves as both neutral and impartial, it is far from certain that other involved actors and parties perceive the force in the same way [26].

A related problem is that it may be necessary to have very robust mandates and limited ROEs in a Peace Support Operation setting. ROEs restrict how an operation can be performed. An example of this is the conflict in Rwanda in 1994 where the French General and the force commander Romeo Dallaire [27] reported being completely paralyzed while genocide was committed. This was due to the unclear mandate and limitation in the ROE. This can lead to a growing dissatisfaction among the force, and thus represents a further command and control challenge for the JFC. An important challenge for the JFC will be to understand the overall political- strategic objectives and then to translate this into a low-intensity conflict with a high degree of complexity [28].

Target selection

Identifying the different elements that need attention is a challenge for a JFC. These elements may be referred to as targets, and the content of a target may vary. A target is defined in the Allied Joint Publication 3.9 on page 1.1 as "a selected geographic area, object, capability, person, or organization (including their will, understanding, and behaviour); which can be influenced as part of the military contribution to a political end-state. A target is normally not critical in and of itself but rather its importance is derived from its potential contribution to achieving the commander's military objective(s)" [29].

Joint targeting is defined as the process of determining the effects necessary to achieve the commander's objectives [29]. The process of target selection is to be understood here as the same as the term targeting. Targeting plays a major role in the planning and conduct of operations. It looks like the targeting process will become increasingly more effect-based in low intensity conflicts [18].

It has been shown that it is of great importance how to win over an opponent. Kagan [30] argues that the true center of gravity in a conflict with a regime change is not to destroy the old system, but to create a new system. This means that one must think about the long-term consequences of the target selection has been made. A regime change after a high-intensity should be viewed in the context of nation-building and peace support. The conflict in Afghanistan is an example of a low-intensity conflicts that shed light on this issue. Is it appropriate through targeting to aid in the destruction of much of the infrastructure of an area if one knows that one will be there for a long

time? Certain goals have proven to be so politically sensitive that you cannot take them out or destroy them [30]. Past wars have usually been characterized as asymmetric wars where war between the actors has been recorded using different objectives, means and methods [31]. Today's low intensity conflicts are to a greater degree characterized by disorganization, and more different actors are involved with various strategic, political, religious and other objectives [2]. Actors are defined as adversaries, and they can both regular and irregular forces, or terrorists and criminal groups [4]. In a low-intensity conflict it is likely that the threshold for what are acceptable targets will decrease [32]. Lessons from recent international conflicts clearly show that the unnecessary loss of civilian and military is accepted to a lesser extent than before.

In addition, it will in a Peace Support Operation be less acceptance of so-called "lethal targeting", and the focus will probably change to "non - lethal targeting". On the other hand in a low-intensity conflict, one has a possibility to use a greater degree of such non-lethal weapons in the targeting process. An earlier example of the use of non-lethal weapons is the use of carbon fiber ammunition to take out power installations in Iraq and Serbia [32].

The aim of a Peace Support Operation can be to secure or to implement a peace agreement. Information Operations and Psychological Operations will usually dominate the target selection process during this period. Regarding the target selection screening process it will often be limited in a Peace Support Operation. In addition, the own forces take much greater account of other actors and civilians in the area. This also concerns how one's own force is perceived by others in the conflict area. When it comes to the target selection and acceptance process it will be characterized by being longer and also by being more complicated in a low-intensity conflict compared with a high-intensity conflict [33]. This is because the various nations' political decision making can take time. One should also be aware of that in a low-intensity conflict time will often be less critical than in a high-intensity conflict. The choice of effectors, i.e. who will carry out what and how, will be much greater in a peace support operation. This will demand more creativity with regard to the choice of means to achieve a desired effect. To make an assessment of the efforts that have been made will often be very difficult. This is because many of the targets will require continuous exposure over a long period, and any effects may be difficult to judge.

Information operations

Information Operations are operations that will support the ongoing operation. Information operations are defined in the Allied Joint Publication 3.10 in page 1-3 as "coordinated actions to create desired effects on the will, understanding and capability of adversaries, potential adversaries and other approved parties in support of Alliance overall objectives by affecting their information, information-based processes and systems while exploiting and protecting one's own" [34]. Information Operations consists of several different disciplines or fields. Key elements of information operations are information security, psychological operations (PSYOPS), deception, electronic warfare, computer network operations and physical destruction of information infrastructure [2]. However, it should be mentioned that during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan the distribution of PSYOPS products did not have any some significant progress due to the fact that the majority of the citizens of Afghanistan are illiterate [7].

The increased importance of Information Operations in a low-intensity conflict must be viewed in relation to the changed global

security situation, focusing on complex interactions between state and non - state actors.

An example of a conflict in which Information Operations has become increasingly important is the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan [7]. One achievement of NATO's final state in Afghanistan for example might not be so dependent on the fact that the founder and leader of al-Queda Osama Bin Laden was killed. A critical aspect will be the extent to which NATO is able to hold together until the end-state of NATO in Afghanistan is obtained. Here, Information Operations could be a significant contribution to creating cohesion both within the coalition and externally to populations in NATO member countries and to the rest of the world. It is important that one takes into account that this type of problem can occur when planning the operation. One can thus avoid the well-known problem that occurred during the Vietnam War where the Americans were finally forced to withdraw from Vietnam. A familiar example of misuse of information during the Vietnam War was the Americans' use of so-called "body count" to demonstrate success in operations. This proved to create a strong dissatisfaction at home in the United States. According to Summers [6], the body count phenomenon rested upon counting the number of dead Vietnamese. This was used as a measure of how effective the operations had been. To complicate the picture further then it is likely that future operations in ongoing low-intensity conflicts do not only occur in the operational area. Future operations will be characterized by transnational actors and the fronts will be in many places at once, both within the operational area and at home in one's own country. Information activities will in such operations be very vulnerable because of the media's role in Peace Support Operations. This means that attention in terms of being culturally sensitive is likely to have a major impact on achieving success in future peace support operations [35].

Conclusion

For a JFC in a joint operation that changes character from being a high-intensity conflict to becoming a low-intensity conflict, there are many challenges. Obviously, this also concerns good end effective leadership. In connection with command and control, especially issues concerning different cultures and the understanding of this can be the most important challenge for a JFC during the transition to a Peace Support Operation setting. Being able to anticipate some of these problems will be essential to a JFC's ability to exercise command and control.

Furthermore, target selection and information operations have proven to be two factors that will have a greater importance in the planning and conduct of operations during a transition from a high-intensity conflict to a low-intensity conflict. Finally, the overall complex leadership challenges are not to be taken lightly. These include building and maintaining trust among staff officers, between organizational levels and the many different bodies that are involved in joint military operations.

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