

THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF JOINT MULTINATIONAL OPERATIONS

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In general, the doctrine for joint multinational operations establishes the set of notions and principles of employing the Romanian armed forces in the joint multinational operations. It presents the multinational operations to which Romania can participate as part of an alliance, coalition or other agreed commitment and highlights the joint organizational formations needed to coordinate land, air, maritime and special joint security operations (defense) in a multinational environment.

It provides the necessary military guidance in the exercise of authority by commanders in the military theater of operations, directing the force-generation activity, planning, transferring authority, and executing the joint multinational operations. It is compatible with the doctrines of multinational operations of the armed forces of Western NATO member states.

In this context, the present paper aims to analyze the characteristics and physiognomy of the joint multinational operations in which forces belonging to the Romanian Army can participate in the context of alliance or coalitions, given the specificity of the current operational environment.

Keywords: joint operations; multinational operations.

Introduction

The reality highlighted by the recent conflicts demonstrates that in the current security environment, military operations have a joint and multinational character, and conventional actions intertwine with unconventional and asymmetric ones. Whether we are talking about state adversaries, non-state actors, or a combination of them, in a potential hybrid conflict, they will use a wide range of asymmetric activities to exploit the vulnerabilities of their opponent. This category includes terrorist, insurgent, separatist, and organized crime actions as part of a dynamic and diversified mix. The military phenomenon analysts expressed this mixture in the concept of „hybrid conflict”. Engaging capabilities specific to each type of operation will occur under the influence of a set of factors, conditions, circumstances, and particular stress factors that define the current security environment. It includes belligerents and neutral actors, the physical environment, and the information (virtual) environment.

Theoretical aspects regarding joint multinational operation

Military operation

The military operation represents all the combat actions carried out by military formations in order to achieve goals at different levels of military art: tactical, operational, or strategic. By adopting the definition provided in AAP-6, NATO's Glossary of Terms and Definitions, the Romanian doctrinal provisions define the operation as a “military action or the execution of a strategic, tactical mission specific to a category of forces, training, or service forces; the process of conducting a fight, including the movement, support, attack, defense, and maneuvers necessary to accomplish the objectives of a battle, operations, or campaign.”¹

Some earlier publications state that the operation represents all the combat operations carried out by operational formations and tactical units following a unique plan. The aim of these operations is considered to be the accomplishment of an operational or strategic purpose and consists, as a rule, of a series of battles coordinated in time and space, based on a unitary concept.²

Joint operation

The “joint” adjective is used to describe the coordinated framework of military activities. These activities involve at least two different branches of the army, components or services.

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The joint operation is defined as: "all the land, air and maritime actions carried by a group consisting of forces or elements and means belonging to several services of armed forces in the appropriate environment specific to each of them in a defined geographic area, in a unitary concept and under the unique command of an joint operational command for the purpose of achieving strategic objectives."³

A more comprehensive definition of the joint operation stipulates that the effort focuses on the synchronization of forces and capabilities provided by the "land, maritime, air, space, cyberspace, special operations and other functional forces"⁴ component, one or some of which to predominate at a particular stage of the operation.

This definition is more comprehensive because it is not limited to the physical nature of the action but also takes into account other components involved in the operation, such as the information one.

Consequently, we believe that the process of analyzing the joint operation can only be achieved in the context of understanding the new physiognomy of modern military conflicts. The new trends involve their deployment in an extended operational environment – where the social environment is a fundamental segment – and include an extremely active information component.

Under these circumstances, the actions carried out involve the integrated and united involvement of all categories of forces intersecting, overlapping, complementing each other.

The joint operation runs over a specified period within the physical boundaries of a geographical area called the joint area of operation, where the commander of the joint force plans and executes an operational level mission.⁵

Reference military publications⁶ include Special Operations Forces (SOF) as one of the components of the joint operation.

Therefore, the components of the combined operation are the following: the land component; the air component; the maritime component; and the special operations component.

The joint operation has a predominantly offensive character and is directed at the strategic and operational centers of gravity of the opponent. The synchronization and coordination of forces and activities within the joint operation shall be ensured permanently in the process of operations,

during its planning, preparation, execution, and evaluation phases.

The success of joint operations is assured by the merged effort of all services and components of the force or the combined effort of at least two of them, operating under a single command.

Integrated operation

The integrated operation is the military action in which civilian and military structures are coordinated with the most diverse roles and positions, which can contribute – by engaging in the specific field of activity – to resolving the conflict and achieving the goals of the military operation. Therefore, the integrated action implies, in our opinion, a conjugation of the individual effort of the entities to achieve a common goal, resulting from putting together the multiple individual goals.

The joint peculiarity requires, first of all, an identification of all actors operating in the operational security environment, their motivations/interests, the influences and resources of each of them to coagulate the energies of those entities. These actors can be conventional military forces; unconventional military forces; asymmetric, neutral or undecided opponents; international bodies; International Organizations (IOs); Non-governmental organizations (NGOs); local and national institutions and authorities; Media; economic agents; private security companies; and the civilian population.

Secondly, the integration process involves a different approach of each actor and finding an appropriate way of communication and interaction between the joint multinational force operating in the theater of operations and that entity. This can be a critical challenge for the joint force commander, a situation that can be overcome by the excellent knowledge of all the actors, the connections and relationships between them and the proper use of communication and negotiation skills. Besides, integration calls on the commander to mediate and harmonize relations between certain actors who may be adversely affected in the context of interpersonal relationships but who are equally beneficial to the military.

Last but not least, we consider that the integration process is continuous and dynamic and must be considered at all stages of the conflict before the armed confrontation arises, during and

after the military operations, in close correlation with the evolution of the operational environment.

Another aspect that deserves to be mentioned is that military operations have acquired a joint facet across the spectrum of the conflict and at all levels at which they place.

We strongly believe that the integration process must be understood and addressed within all its aspects: structural, cognitive, information, and logistic. Thus, the organizations, the common understanding of reality, the activities carried out, and the resources made available and shared can be channeled, based on the outlined operational design, in order to achieve the overall goals of the operation. This requires a thorough and sustained effort to coordinate all the integrated components during the planning, preparation, execution, and evaluation of the military operation, especially in the context of hybrid conflicts, which we consider to be quintessential for this type of operation.

Multinational operation

Nowadays, the vast majority of military operations are carried out within a multinational framework due to the need for visibility of political consensus and the legitimacy of military action. Cooperation within the multinational operation is carried out with both traditional members and partners within the alliances and with less familiar members in coalitions of states.⁷

The multinational operation is a military operation involving forces from at least two nations acting together to carry out a mission. The "multinational" adjective describes both the participation of national elements in the constitution the force and their engagement in activities and operations. Within NATO, for the multinational operation, both the "combined force" and the "multinational combined force" are used to describe an operation carried out by force composed of two or more nations that act together and which include elements of at least two services of the army.⁸

Peculiarities of the joint operation carried out in a multinational context

"The military structures of the future will be conceived and trained to carry out complex military actions in a joint context, often with a multinational, modular structure that can be adapted in short time

*to the mission and the particular conditions."*⁹

The concept of joint operation is not entirely new to the Romanian military theory and practice. Known in recent decades as the "air-land battle", the concept has been studied only from the perspective of the defender: the Romanian armed forces were considered the part that was supposed to counteract hostile joint military action. Operational and strategic level actions in the Romanian Army over the last twenty years have been a model in this respect. The regulations in force required the conception or execution echelons to create a tactical, operational or strategic framework in which the planned actions, regardless of the branches of the army or services, have to be integrated.

From a historic point of view, joint actions of two or more categories of forces have taken place since the first division of the armed forces (infantry and cavalry), to which artillery and battleships were later added. However, they were complementary or mutually supportive military actions and not considered to be *joint* military actions.

Two events preceded the official discussion of the concept of *joint* military action.

The first was the Falkland/Malvinas War (1982), in which modern British royal military forces had to face the more arduous Argentine army, but with the considerable advantage of the land on its side. The lack of air protection of the British maritime convoys by the Royal Air Forces (RAF) produced significant human and equipment losses and quickly constituted an almost destabilizing factor.

The second example was the US Grenade Rescue Mission in 1983, in which the incompatibility of communications, combat procedures and even maps weakened the intensity of air operations. As a result of the lessons learned from these conflicts, in 1986 the US Congress approved the so-called *Goldwater-Nichols Act*, which was the cornerstone of the future integration of US forces and the creation of United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) on October 7, 1999.

Following the American model, in the same year, the British Government approved the establishment of a Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood, London (PJHQ) and the transformation of the military colleges of force categories into a single Joint Services Command and Staff College

(JSCSC). This is a British military academic establishment providing training and education to experienced officers of the Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, Ministry of Defence Civil Service, and serving officers of other states.¹⁰

From the semantic analysis of the syntagm “integrated character”, by associating the meaning of the two notions, it is clear that this is a distinctive feature, which is the specificity of military action “harmonized in one”¹¹. In other words, the integrated nature of military actions expresses the degree of harmonization and synchronization of all elements that make up an active system such as battle, operation, or campaign. That meant all forces and means, regardless of the type and branches of the army or services they are part of.

The integrated character of military actions is a feature of operations, the emergence of which was determined by the multiplication of the action couples that it composes, being a natural consequence of the increase in the number of branches of the army and the organization of modern armies by different services. At the same time, these features are reasonable consequences of the evolution of the war phenomenon, as a result of the development of science and technology. This trend has continuously increased in complexity, resulting in a continuous amplification of the connections between the composing elements.

The joint operations are inevitably important components (campaigns, battles or operations) of the war, knowing that the war has an extensive range of expression, far exceeding the sphere of violent confrontation. Thus, the emergence of the joint concept of operation is a consequence of the evolutionary-historic process of military art. The current acceptance of the phrase “joint operation” embraces its multiple and complex aspects, defining in principle the sum of the military actions, and not only, carried out at operational, strategic and tactical levels. The force is composed of several categories of forces of the modern armies, under a single leadership, after a unitary conception and having a single objective/mission.

By proceeding to a translation of the theoretical and practical issues, it is worth noting that this integrated character involved a considerable increase in the importance of cooperation between the forces participating in the integrated military actions in order to accomplish the purpose of the

operation. As a result, the provisions of the specific rules, forms, and methods of cooperation, in order to jointly carry out combat missions, began to appear in the content of the fighting regulations of each branch of the army and service category.

The need to interconnect the specific mode of accomplishing one’s missions with that of other branches of the army appeared not only within a category of forces that usually act in the same environment and against the same opponent but also between branches of the army belonging to different services of the military. In the same manner, one can analyze the character of inter-categories of army forces of recent military actions, a peculiarity that expresses the functional relations between at least two services within the operations that can be of strategic but also an operational level.

Within the strategic sphere, the joint feature of operations is implicit, due to the participation, as a rule, of both, services and branches of the army. In the same context, the integrated nature is revealed mainly in the strategic level operations, but one should not exclude the possibility of its materialization also at the operational level, as in the case of setting up joint level gatherings. Of course, these come from tactical or operational formations belonging to several services.

By deepening the analysis, the integrated character of inter-armed forces and inter-categories of army forces can be highlighted and will have to be achieved at all stages of the preparation and conduct of military actions. During the preparation of the military actions, the realization of integrated inter-branches and inter-services has a special significance and must be found in each of the activities that take place at the level of the JFC.

As such, developing the concept of the use in operation, tailoring forces and means must originate from a thorough analysis of the missions, the adversary, space, and the available time. A correlation and interconnection of the missions’ variables must be carried out in the first stage of the operations process, according to the potentialities of the forces and means available and on the corresponding character of the actions of different branches of the armies and services.

The finality of these concerns will be the focus of efforts to achieve the goals of the joint operation by highlighting all the elements that give the unitary character to the armed struggle in

general. All these elements of conception will be materialized in a single, unitary operation plan, based on which orders and provisions are emitted for all subordinate structures.

It is also important to remark that, in a similar integrative perception, the logistic dilemmas will be solved, revealed in a separate plan, even if the material assurance responsibilities will still belong to other structures not directly involved in military actions. A real synchronization and interconnection, the complementarity and synergy of military actions will be displayed, especially during the conduct of the joint operations.

Harmonizing the efforts of all participating units to achieve the objectives of the joint operations, will be achieved through the unique management of the actions and their permanent coordination. The basis for achieving this desideratum, which confers the integrity of operations, will be to organize and maintain permanent cooperation.

The joint operations are planned and executed on three levels: strategic, operational, and tactical. A joint operation is a set of military actions taken simultaneously on land, in the air, and sometimes also on the sea (river), on the high seas and the broad front, by groups of operational level forces. At this level, operations are prepared and conducted based on a unitary concept and a singular plan in one or more operational areas including objectives of political, economic and military importance, the maintenance or release of which allows for the partial achievement of the war.

In the perception of some advanced western armies, the purpose of the successful joint operation is consistently pursuing "... *the simultaneous engagement and hitting of the enemy on the entire depth of the battlespace. As a consequence, the opponents' fighting formation will be blocked and consequently its reactions are slowed down, desynchronized, and ultimately paralyzed*"; in that way; it will "*create the necessary conditions for the continued successful offensive actions*". The Romanian doctrines subsequently implemented this valuable idea.¹²

The current joint actions require an appropriate doctrine and capable forces to act together, in a joint and integrated manner. They need to complement and rely on each other in all phases of engaging. In order to lead a joint force capable of acting in a short time, the commander of the Force Command

must have at his disposal appropriate technical support, adapted to the type of operation and the requirements of the modern combat space. Without an integrated command, control, communication and information system capable of integrating the information flow and assisting the staff in the decision process, it will not be possible to create the optimum conditions for a joint force command.

The intervention of the international community can provide a satisfactory response to solving crises through specific means of the strategic level. These means are replicated by political, diplomatic, information, and economic tools. The use of power tools in joint multinational operations is the last resort. The integrated action of forces in multinational combined operations is the result of the establishment of alliances or coalitions among nations. This alignment provides the necessary framework for the achievement of common goals and objectives, taking into account the diplomatic realities, constraints, limitations, and objectives of the member countries, of the participating or contributing countries.

The Alliance is an agreement concluded based on formal agreements between two or more states, with medium and long-term political and military objectives, aiming at achieving common interests and goals, as well as promoting the national values of its members.

The coalition is an ad hoc political and military arrangement between two or more states, designed to carry out joint actions. In the context of a coalition, multinational action takes place outside the links established within the Alliance and refers to unique situations or long-lasting cooperation in a specific area, that is, where a common interest is identified.

The coalition warfare involves addressing and solving the following vital issues: creating a multinational military force under the aegis of the ruling nation; the establishment of multinational governing bodies; coordination of political, economic, military, technical-scientific efforts; as well as achieving logistic compatibility and infrastructure development.

Multinational joint operations are those military actions involving two or more states with military forces of different sizes belonging to several services, under political control and single command and for which a single objective has

been established. Multinational quality reflects the political need to seek international consensus and legitimacy of military action.¹³ NATO must always be ready to work with traditional members and partners, but also with other, less familiar forces, in a coalition. Mutual trust is essential when working in a multinational environment.

The primary purpose of a multinational operation is to direct the military effort to achieve the common goal. Multinational operations are unique. Each national commander is responsible in front of the commander of the multinational force, in front of his national chain of command and, last but not least, is responsible for carrying out the entrusted mission.¹⁴

Within NATO, Multinational Combined Joint Operations are those operations involving armed forces from two or more countries and involve at least two categories of armed forces. The Allied Joint Operation concept refers to operations involving forces belonging only to NATO member countries.¹⁵

The following types of armed forces can participate in such operations:

a) Command Forces – those forces that are still in peacetime under Operational Command or NATO Operational Control;

b) Allocated Forces – provided for actions under NATO control;

c) The forces that are foreseen for future NATO-led actions (Assigned Forces) – will strengthen the forces initially committed. To carry out these operations, NATO uses different models for organizing multinational units.

The joint action of the forces in the multinational joint operations is the result of the establishment of alliances or coalitions between nations which provide the necessary framework for the fulfillment of common goals and objectives. These coagulations generally take account of the diplomatic realities, constraints, limitations, and objectives of the member countries, or contributions.¹⁶

In case military operations are to be carried out along with Allied forces, in the framework of joint multinational operations, the efficiency of the Romanian Armed Forces is dependent on a number of factors, of which the most important we consider to be: the goals pursued by each member of the Alliance (the coalition); the battle doctrine; the level of training; the interoperability of the equipment,

the means of striking and other equipment; cultural differences; language; mutual trust; the teamwork.

In cooperation with allied forces, national goals can be harmonized based on a common strategy. If they are expressed callously by each member without concessions, then, instead of uniting them and contributing to the cohesion of the coalition, they will highlight the differences of interest. The commonality of the goals pursued ensures the functionality of the coalition, as the emphasis on common elements can reduce dysfunctions while maintaining its operational character.

Besides the common goals pursued in the multinational joint operations, one of the fundamental problems that give the contents of the cooperation with the allied forces is the compatibility of the Romanian doctrines with those of the partners. The compatibility that we must remember must be achieved within all functional operating systems/ battlefield operating system of military action (combat functions), namely: intelligence, maneuver, fire support, force protection, logistics, and command and control.

Achieving compatibility between the doctrines of the Romanian and Allied forces is of vital importance for the physiognomy and the outcome of the operations, influencing the choice of forms and procedures of struggle adopted by the partners, the goals proposed in the joint actions and the dynamic equilibrium of the forces. If these aspects were not taken into account, the actions of the whole force could be damaged by the occurrence of inequalities and fractures, operations suffering from conceptual and action incompatibility. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that not all differences between doctrines have a subjective determination due to the differences existing in the supply of weapons systems and combat techniques.

Eliminating the adverse consequences due to the existing differences between the battle doctrines could be achieved by: the support for the weaker partner, so that its units are brought in terms of fighting capacity to the level closest to that of the most potent partner; differentiated assignment of responsibilities and missions among Allies, depending on the real operational capabilities of each of them.

Along with the compatibility of battle doctrines, we consider that one of the factors contributing to the success of joint operations is the relatively close level of training of the committed and allied forces.

It will be influenced by: the degree of professionalization of partner forces; the compatibility of the doctrine; the degree of integration of training systems; and the technical level of the specific endowment.

Achieving the goals pursued in the military actions carried out in cooperation with allied forces and the achievement of the compatibility of battle doctrines are to a great extent dependent on the interoperability of the technique, the striking means and the various equipment used. The commander of the joint multinational forces will have to solve the problems due to the inevitable differences between the weapon systems, equipment, and devices used by the forces participating in the joint actions against a potential aggressor. These are much greater in cooperation with other forces than those traditional ones, formed in the ad-hoc coalition.

Moreover, even within the recognized, permanent, alliances, there still remain a large number of incompatibilities that will have to be overcome.

Conclusions

In the actual context of hybrid conflicts, the typology of actions in terms of the dangers, risks, and threats, presents a shift from the traditional to the unconventional ones, and especially the asymmetric ones. They tend to generalize and to manifest itself throughout the conflict and throughout its spectrum.

They will also express themselves in the future by coordinated action, especially in real and figurative conditions of night and visibility, with no precise, distinct fingerprint, which will lead to an intense and constant fighting rhythm on the part of the opposing force.

In order to achieve this imperative, it will constitute a conglomerate that is carefully proportional to the types of structures and forces that are capable of engaging the hybrid opponent on each component distinctly but at the same time coordinated to maintain the continuity and rhythm of operations.

From this point of view, the armed forces must be prepared to execute a wide range of missions in a joint and multinational context, in different regions and in a complex operational and consequently uncertain environment. They will face a variety of

hybrid threats and simultaneous combinations of types of activities that will change and adapt at all times.

This requires anticipating, identifying, and understanding the goals of a wide variety of involved actors, even from the planning stage of the joint operation, to integrate, coordinate, and synchronize their efforts.

Understanding the complexity of the hybrid operating environment is a significant challenge for the commander and the staff of the joint multinational force.

In the context of the hybrid conflict, operations are conducted through the joint, integrated action of branches of the army, specialties, and services. Their engagement takes place in a complex operational environment in which a multitude of entities – institutions, authorities, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, nations – can influence positively or negatively the conduct of military operations.

NOTES:

1 *** *Doctrina Armatei României*, București, 2012, *Anexa nr. 1*, p. 136.

2 *** *Lexicon militar*, Editura Militară, București, 1980, p. 474.

3 *** *Doctrina Armatei României*, București, 2012, *Anexa nr. 1*, p. 136.

4 *AJP-3(B)*, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO Standardization Agency (NSA), March 2011, p.ix.

5 *AAP-6*, *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO Standardization Agency (NSA), 2012, p. 2-J-1.

6 *AJP-3(B)*, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO Standardization Agency (NSA), March 2011, pp. 1-10.

7 *AJP-3(B)*, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO Standardization Agency (NSA), March 2011, pp. 1-10.

8 *AAP-6*, *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO Standardization Agency (NSA), 2012, p.2-C-9, 2-M-10.

9 Gl. dr. Mureșan Mircea, Gl. bg. (r) dr. Țenu Costică, Col. (r) dr. Stăncilă Lucian, *Operațiile întrunite în războiul viitorului*, Editura UNAp, București, 2005, p. 11.

10 Information available on www.Joint_Services_Command_and_Staff_College accessed on 27 July, 2019.

11 *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române*, Editura Academiei, București, 1984, p. 119.

12 *AJP-3.2*, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Land Operations*, Edition A, Version 1, 2016, pp. 1-12, art. 0134.

13 *AJP-3*, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, Edition C, Version 1, 2019, pp. 2-6.



14 JP 3-16, *Multinational Operations*, 2013, p. II-3.
15 AJP-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, Edition C, Version 1, 2019, pp. 1-7.
16 *Ibidem*, p. 12.

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