THE MULTIDOMAIN APPROACH WITHIN LAND FORCES' OPERATIONS

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The frequency of operational changes, which are often unpredictable, and the difficulty of addressing the challenges posed by them represent sufficient motivational factors to trigger the Land Forces' adaptation to the requirements of the operational environments. For these reasons, the article aims to highlight the foundation of a new operational approach able to ensure for Land Forces' military structures the augmentation of their combat power and also the possibility to transcend the traditional approach of the military operation to a multidomain one, much more suitable to the context of contemporary and future operational environments. Also, highlighting the attributes necessary for commanders, staff and subordinate structures, as well as analyzing the operational implications for Land Forces' military structures are the primary objectives which are circumscribed to the purpose of this research.

Keywords: multidomain approach; JIIM; MDO; combat power; combat functions.

As introductory aspects, highlighting the context of the need to transcend the operational approach based on using the combat functions, it can be stated that there were many situations in which the Land Forces, in general, and their organic structures, in particular, did not have an adequate operational response or, in other words, their operational response did not generate the intended effects. There are many examples of this, but perhaps the most appropriate are Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), which is still ongoing, or the COVID-19 pandemic situation, perceived by all entities involved in its management as well as by the affected parties, as being extremely volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA). What is certain is that, regardless of the operational context of different military forces, they have to use permanent adjustments, due to the fact that in approaching any operational environment there will be accentuated discrepancies between the planning activity and the execution one. Moreover, approaching the operational environments by the Land Forces using the combat power's elements such as leadership, information and dedicated combat functions, is somewhat insufficient, having an apparently isolated character, reflecting negatively on its direction. On the other hand, the management of COVID-19 pandemic, which many structures from Land Forces take part in, provides the necessary context for rethinking the operational modalities with obvious effects on combat power and operations process.

Therefore, based on the lessons learned from the highlighted examples, and not only, the modeling of the combat power generated by Land Forces' military structures should be performed in order to amplify nonlethal actions through integration of all target domains, especially non-military ones, which, until recently, have not been part of the military operational strategies.

Operational approach using combat functions versus multidomain approach

At present, most of the Land Forces from modern armies perform military operations by generating and directing combat power throughout the area of responsibility (AOR), area of operations (AO), which, as we know, can be individual, joint (Joint Operational Area – JOA) or multinational (Combined Joint Operational Area – CJOA) in nature. This traditional approach of military operations is based on the principle that "commanders apply combat power through warfighting functions using leadership and information"[1].

Starting from this principle, a first step in adapting the traditional approach of military operations, no matter the level of the employing structure, has already been initiated and consists in integrating them into the unified action, respecting the model promoted by the Army of United States

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of America (USA) or within the comprehensive approach, according to the doctrinal principle of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Basically, named differently, their meaning is similar, being summarized as:

• unified action – represents "the synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort"[2];

• comprehensive approach – performed through the "effective coordination and cooperation among national governmental departments and agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGO), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), local authorities and the private sector"[3].

This first step, consisting in the integration of land operations into the unified action or comprehensive approach is the bridge between the traditional engagement of operations and the one of multidomain. Therefore, an essential element in solving this puzzle of the multidomain approach is the one of multidomain operations (MDO), defined in the military literature as "operations conducted across multiple domains and contested spaces to overcome an adversary's (or enemy's) strengths by presenting them with several operational and/or tactical dilemmas through the combined application of calibrated force posture; employment of multi-domain formations; and convergence of capabilities across domains, environments, and functions in time and spaces to achieve operational and tactical objectives"[4]. Analyzing the previous definition, we find the insertion of key notions such as those highlighted in Table no. 1.

Along with these concepts associated with multidomain approach, another term is that of multidomain battle (MDB), formalized by the USA Army as a solution to obtain operational advantages in conducting Land Forces' operations. Consisting in "convergence of capabilities to create windows of advantage (often temporary) across multiple domains and contested areas throughout the depth of the battlespace to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative; defeat enemies; and achieve military objectives"[8], this term is introduced to resurrect the ability of Land Forces' structures to maneuver and generate interconnected multidirectional effects in order to create and exploit operational opportunities both at strategic level, and especially for operational and tactical ones.

Therefore, correlating all these concepts and transposing them on the current strategy for approaching the military operations (performing combat functions), it can be concluded that the multidomain approach of Land Forces' operations assumes the augmentation the combat power of organic structure by integrating the capabilities from various domains such as joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM). Graphically, the multidomain approach within Land Forces is highlighted in Figure 1.

Table no. 1

TERMS USED TO UNDERSTAND MDO

Terms	Significance
calibrated force posture	„the combination of capacity, capability, position, and the ability to maneuver across strategic distances"[5]
multidomain formations	„possess the combination of capacity, capability, and endurance which generates the resilience necessary to operate across multiple domains … can conduct independent maneuver, employ cross-domain fires, and maximize human potential"[6]
convergence of multidomain capabilities	„rapid and continuous integration of capabilities in all domains, the EMS, and the information environment that optimizes effects to overmatch the enemy through cross-domain synergy and multiple forms of attack …"[7]; EMS stands for electromagnetic spectrum

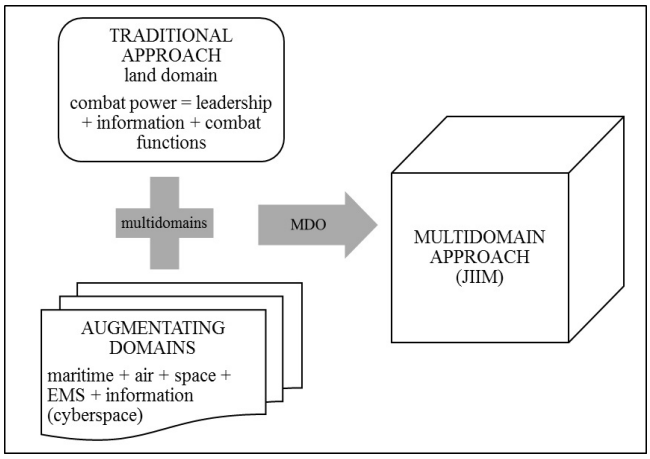

Figure 1 *Multidomain approach within Land Forces*
(The author's conception)

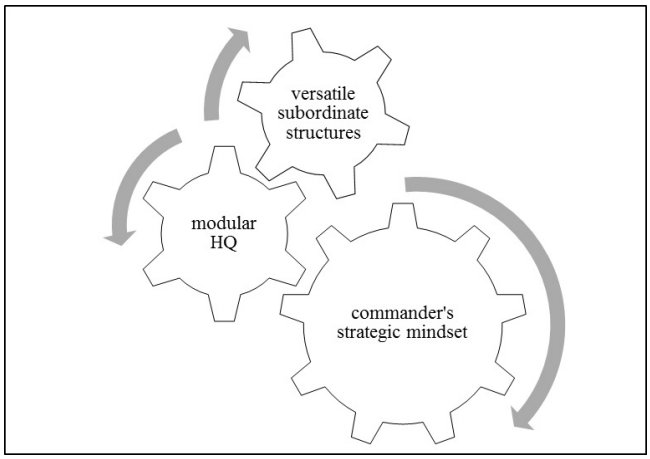

Figure 2 *Minimal attributes for Land Forces' multidomain approach*
(The author's conception)

Consequently, the problem that arises can be reduced to optimizing the traditional approach of military operation and not giving up its use, as the multidomain approach of Land Forces should be understood as an optimized version of the previous one by integrating the capabilities from multiple domains in order to maximize the effects.

Attributes for commanders, staff and subordinate structures

Certainly, the use of the multidomain approach by the Land Forces determines a series of implications at the level of dedicated military structures. In this sense, in Figure 2 there are pictured some critical attributes of the multidomain approach, imprinting the commander, headquarter (HQ) and subordinate structures.

Related to the strategy of developing Land Forces' multidomain approach, this involves building all minimum critical attributes, the absence of one from these affecting in a negative fashion its application or, in a much more unfortunate situation, making impossible its engagement in specific military operations.

The first attribute, strategic mindset, once developed, will provide that "ability to successfully deal with change and ambiguity through creating common purpose, buy-in and alignment with workgroups supported by sound strategy formulation and implementation"[9]. In the context of military operations, the strategic mindset does not target strategic commanders, as this requirement is already their attribute, but rather those who operate within the operational and tactical structures. Exemplifying for the tactical level, strategic thinking offers a brigade commander, even a battalion commander, the ability to easily decipher the operational contexts specific to the operational and strategic levels based on understanding the common operational picture (COP). In this way, the tactical commander will have the ability to make sound decisions whose application will generate second or even third order effects.

The next attribute, the modular HQ, implies its augmentation with structures and personnel from different fields (braches/specializations, services, agencies, civil organizations, and so forth) related to mission's analysis, so that the HQ might become much more robust, able to correlate and perform multidomain activities and tasks. The HQ's augmentation in the sense of developing its modularity can be achieved either in the form of integrating in its organic the target structures and personnel, or through close interdepartmental or interinstitutional cooperation, if the first form is not at hand.

The last attribute highlighted in the figure above, the versatile subordinate units, is a primary effect of modularity and refers to "the physical and structural ability to perform many functions"[10]. Therefore, in the multidomain approach, the versatile subordinate forces will be able to carry out simultaneously and/or successively multiple activities in diversified environments to achieve the desired tasks and effects. A solution for developing the forces' versatility is to organize them in the form of battle groups (BG) in relation to the mission's requirements and the nature of CJOA/JOA/AO.

Consequently, the development of these attributes is an essential step for the multidomain

approach, depending on the development of other additional capabilities. For these reasons and also having the necessary framework formalized, it can be appreciated that the more developed the minimum attributes, the higher the probability of using multidomain approach in the Land Forces' operations.

Operational implications for the Land Forces

At the level of the USA Army, transposing the MDO into reality reflects on the amplified possibilities of maneuvering and operational support (OS) in the three plans of military operations: strategic, operational, and tactical (Table no. 2).

first of all, the adjustment of the values from the table above in relation to the perspectives of developing the Land Forces and Romanian Army capabilities. Moreover, adjustments are needed in the doctrine and operational strategies that will imprint the techniques, tactics, procedures (TTPs) used by different military structures from Land Forces' configuration.

Most likely, in order to attain the desired end state (DES), the operational principle of multidomain approach within national Land Forces is the one pictured in Figure 3.

It can be noticed that the final actionable agents will be represented by the modular tactical

Table no. 2

MANEUVERING/OS POSSIBILITIES USING MDO – USA ARMY[11]

Levels of military operationse	Maneuver	OS	MDO capabilities
strategic	-	> 5.000 km	land, air, maritime, spatial, EMS, information (cyber)
operational	-	> 1.500 km	
tactical	> 200 km	> 500 km	

As it can be seen, the data presented spin around the tactical level of USA Army's operations. Therefore, using MDO capabilities, tactical military structures can perform the maneuver over a much longer distance (200 km), being under the coverage

military structures (*MTMS*). Regarding the force's modularity, it is essential for MDO engagement, as it firstly allows modeling the force related to the operational requirements and mission analysis, and secondly ensures the ability of organic elements to

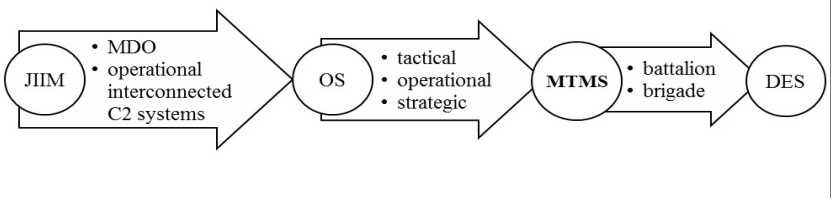

Figure 3 *The operational principle of multidomain approach within Land Forces*

(The author's conception)

of tactical, operational and strategic OS according to the values from Table no. 2. On the other hand, the above information is applicable to the USA Army, but due to the fact that USA is a member of NATO it should be considered from the perspective of common military action, assuming the prior coagulation of multinational military structures in an allied context.

Regarding the perspective of MDO implementation at national level, this determines,

be "interchangeable, expandable and tailorable …"[12]. In the operational context, all these effects of modularity are generated by changes in the operations process, fueling the engaging structures and elements with increased capacities for action, reaction and counteraction to counter threats or take advantage of opportunities arisen in the dynamics of military operation.

Generally speaking, the interconnectivity and synergy of JIIM domains, covering the whole

spectrum of the operations, will generate the strategic, operational and tactical OS, able to ensure sufficient supplementation of the MTMS combat power. During military operations, the MTMS can benefit from the effects of the JIIM relationship, either indirectly through higher echelons, or directly, in culminating decision-making situations, when timely provision of critical OS can make the difference.

Conclusions

The aspects highlighted in this article have substantiated the awareness and understanding of some possibilities for adapting the Land Forces to the requirements of operational contexts. Regarding the proposed solution, the one of multidomain approach, it brings as a novelty the resizing of the MTMS combat power by catalyzing specific elements, using the capabilities of all spectra of the operational environment, which once correlated, will rise to MDO or MDB. Thus, in an operational context, benefiting from multilevel and multispectral OS, the MTMS will use significantly increased key functions, both in terms of discovering, fixing and striking the enemy, and, especially, in exploiting success.

Also, solving the problem exposed, through its absolute novelty and extremely complex character, transcends the ways of linear thinking, requiring theoretical-praxiological approaches in nonlinear reference horizons, as the physiognomy of the operational environment is estimated. Thus, in the sense of the multidomain approach, as we have seen, this principle has a much stronger impact on military operations' agents and, in particular, on commanders, the most requested being the tactical ones, because the application of strategic thinking is much more difficult for military structures located at the primary level of the operations, such as the tactical. With integrated visualization of the operation (strategic, operational, tactical), based on understanding the multilevel COP, the MTMS commanders will be able to provide timely decisions to ensure the necessary conditions for subordinate forces to achieve the actionable performance.

On the other hand, building and developing the multidomain approach within Land Forces, cannot be solved only by formalizing the principles and TTPs inside specific doctrines and operational strategies, although this should be the initial phase of the overall process. Once the initial phase has been completed, the effort will focus on coagulating the MDO knowledge, skills and abilities at the level of MTMS personnel, a considerable contribution belonging to the planning and development of JIIM exercises whose scenarios will have to ensure sufficient actionable contexts for the simulated force within all spheres of the operational environment. For this desideratum to become a reality, organizational reconfigurations of land military structures are required, in terms of the staff and subordinate forces' organization.

Moreover, although the subject of this research has focused only on the Land Forces, in the sense of formalizing and developing coherently the multidomain approach, similar efforts should be made by other military services, agencies or other entities involved. Only in this way, will the collective effort of the structures involved guarantee the setting of a joint, interdepartmental, intergovernmental and/or multinational mentality that will ensure the integration into the operation of the highlighted principles. In other words, a unified conception of multidomain approach should be defined, accepted by all the parties involved. In this respect, it is necessary to develop working groups to include the participation of specialists from all the mentioned fields.

Finally, it can be concluded that approaching the operation by employing multidomain capabilities is not only an imperative for the operational adaptation of the Land Forces to NATO requirements, but can also be a national strategy whose applicability on medium and long term will ensure lethal/nonlethal effects in the most marked operational contexts by VUCA characteristics, as that of COVID-19 pandemic is considered.

NOTES:

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