



OPERATING CONCEPTS – AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES DEVELOPMENT

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10.55535/RMT.2024.2.1

Military operating concepts are the mandatory starting point for the defence forces design and development. The Consolidated National Defence and the Integrated Joint Force, two operating concepts presented in the Military Strategy of Romania - 2021, provide the necessary vision for the transformation and adaptation of the Romanian Armed Forces and the joint force to the current and future realities of the operating environment.

In this article the author presents some considerations related to the place, role and importance of operating concepts used by the armed forces of other states, accompanied by some examples and points of view that might help to better understand the terms, to develop and implement these concepts and their subsequent concepts, doctrines, and capabilities through which they are operationalized in the Romanian Armed Forces.

Keywords: concepts; development; joint forces; capabilities; Romanian Armed Forces;



Motto:

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success”.

Henry Ford

INTRODUCTION

Transformation and adaptation are essential processes for any organization that wants to successfully achieve its goals and develop in a constantly changing environment. For any state defence forces, these processes are carried out based on a framework built on high-level programmatic documents (strategies, policies, strategic guidance etc.), which sets the desired end state, objectives, main directions of action, and other details required for these forces design and development.

The military transformation process is an ongoing and complex one. It started with the first force structure and it is still on. Theorized and put in practice by the development and implementation of new concepts, strategies, doctrines and capabilities, it aims currently to increase the efficiency of military structures by creating effects simultaneously in several operational domains (land, air, sea, space and cyber), by integrating forces at national and multinational level, by quickly adapting to changes in the operating environment or by other methods that ensure the successful fulfilment of the objectives, missions and tasks entrusted to them.

One of the key elements of this process are new, innovative concepts, those ideas and notions that define and describe future contexts and situations, challenges, problems and specific solutions, here the military instrument of power.

This paper presents some considerations related to the place, role and importance of operating concepts used by the armed forces of other states, accompanied by some examples and points of view that can help to better understand the terms, to develop and successfully implement these concepts and the subsequent ones, those doctrines

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and capabilities by which they are operationalized in the Romanian Armed Forces. At the same time, this work is intended to be a follow-on to one article I wrote in 2020 (Portase, 2020), a more detailed view on an element of the proposed strategy for the Romanian Naval Forces development – the concepts.

The information in this article is addressed to all those interested in how the Romanian Armed Forces design and development could be carried out, including those who might be involved in the new security and defence concepts implementation [extended national security (National Defence Strategy/SNAP., 2020), consolidated national defence, integrated joint force (Military Strategy/SMR, 2021) etc.].

It should be stated that the information presented in this work comes exclusively from the public domain, and despite its limitations given due to the lack of access to classified documents and discussions or to those which have not been made public until now, this work can be widely disseminated within communities of interest from both the public and private sectors.

OPERATING CONCEPTS – PLACE AND ROLE IN THE SPECIALIZED LITERATURE

The changing nature of the operating environment and the nature of military actions, the emergence of new threats generated by innovative approaches and capabilities by some international actors constitute risk factors for national security and defence. To be able to successfully manage them, military forces must adapt, develop, or even reinvent themselves on how they use current and future capabilities. The design and development of military forces is a long-term process, which requires the development of new concepts and capabilities, as well as their experimentation and validation, before their actual implementation and use.

A concept can be seen as an agreed notion or idea, usually presented in a document, which provides solutions in solving a problem specific to a field of operation and which can lead to the development of a way forward. Since the ambiguous definition of a concept or the assignment of a generic name to it can create problems instead of solutions, I consider it necessary to first present the place and the role

that operational concepts occupy in the military lexicon, also providing some examples for a better understanding.

Military concepts are, as a rule, descriptions of a method or scheme for using a certain military capability to achieve a stated goal or objective. This description may be general or specific and may range from describing in generic terms the use of military forces in the broadest sense to specifying in detail the use of a particular training or technical system.

In principle, the process of developing military concepts is initiated when there is a need to find a solution to a newly emerging/identified military problem (e.g. the emergence of a new type of threat, the use of emerging/disruptive technologies) or to an already existing problem (e.g. a better solution can be found as a result of the emergence of a new technology, by implementing a new organization or tactic etc.).

There are a lot of military concepts taxonomies in military literature, but there is no generally accepted hierarchy for these concepts. Thus, according to a NATO (2021) hierarchy used for concept development and experimentation, military concepts are strategic concepts, operational concepts and functional concepts. Unfortunately, this simple classification does not cover the wider range of their use at national level (to include, for instance, tactical level concepts applicable to armed forces services – CS or concepts used by support commands – SC), thus making this hierarchy inadequate. This article argues to maintain the hierarchy presented in the Military Strategy of Romania/SMR – 2016, but supplemented to include elements of the hierarchy used by Schmitt (2002) and Pikner, Zuna, Spisak, Galatik (2013), a hierarchy where military concepts are presented from general to particular as follows:

- **institutional concepts** – related to the operation of military institutions, as a whole (strategic credibility; inter-institutional approach and planning; the concept of a NATO accredited Centre of Excellence etc.);
- **operating concepts** – describe the way military forces operate¹/ use the necessary capabilities to respond to future military

¹ The term “operating” is preferred by some authors to avoid possible confusions of using the term “operational”, a term with double meaning – one as the operational level of warfare and the other as the attribute related to military operations (operational) (A.N.).



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The term “operating concept” can be used to define both the operating concept of a certain type of force structure – starting from its highest level (capstone concept) and down to the basic one (cornerstone concept) and the ranking of military concepts according to the warfare level (strategic, operational, or tactical concept).

challenges, applying military art and science in situations defined by a certain set of parameters (type of mission, operating environment, type of force, level of warfare etc.);

- **functional concepts**² – relating to how to exercise certain military function (command and control, manoeuvre, fire, protection etc.);
- **enabling or integrating concepts** – describe the capability employment to perform a specific military function or those having an integrative character (IAMD, MDA³, inter-institutional, multinational etc.); they add depth and detail to one or more assembled operating concepts.

The major advantage of this hierarchy is that the term “operating concept” can be used to define both the operating concept of a certain type of force structure – starting from its highest level (capstone concept) and down to the basic one (cornerstone concept) and the ranking of military concepts according to the warfare level (strategic, operational, or tactical concept).

In terms of their role, military concepts are multipurpose documents. Basically, they present visions or ideas that an organization uses to anticipate and adapt to the emerging challenges of the operating environment and to prepare theoretically and practically the problem solving. Their scope and degree of detail differ depending on the level of warfare they are developed for (strategic, operational, tactical) and the area where they will be implemented (operational, functional etc.). Mainly, military concepts are used in defining the necessary solutions for new doctrine, forces or capabilities development, but they can also contribute to institutional strategies development by defining visions (a generic example is shown in *figure 1*), presenting approaches or proposing frameworks as solution-oriented ideas to achieve desired goals or end states.

² Some recent documents include the functional, enabling, integrating and SC/CS concepts into a single category – supporting concepts (A.N.).

³ IAMD-Integrated Air and Missile Defense, MDA-Maritime Domain Awareness.

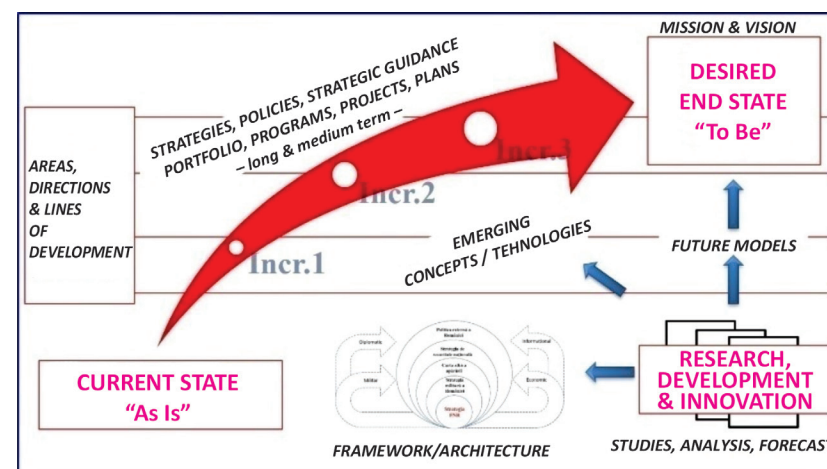


Figure 1: Strategy for the development of the Romanian Naval Forces (Portase, 2020)

Military capstone operating concepts⁴ are usually the joint operating concepts to ensure the link between strategic directions on security and defence matters and the integrated action of joint force capabilities. They provide the necessary context for armed forces transformation, general approaches to how to solve a potential future military problem and the conceptual framework required for the lower-level military concepts and new capabilities development. These concepts outline how the joint force will act to conduct operations in the next 15-20 years and facilitate concept development and experimentation and joint capabilities development through DOTMLPFI (Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities and Interoperability) solutions. Generally, military capstone operating concepts are based on the strategy pursued for the achievement of military objectives, thus contributing to national objectives achievement, by carrying out joint actions together with national organizations or multinational partners.

Joint operating concepts are concepts below the fundamental concept of operation level that describe how the joint force commander intends to plan, prepare, deploy, employ, and sustain a joint force against potential adversary capabilities in a specific operation type or

⁴ E.g. Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO) in the USA or Integrating Operating Concept (IOpC) in the UK.



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in the event of a crisis. Unlike the military capstone operating concept, the joint operating concept addresses planning and execution aspects of a specific campaign or operation type or of a particular scenario, identifies the challenges and essential capabilities required and the conditions under which they will be used. The joint operating concepts are the “*transformation engine*” and serve as a guide for the development and integration of joint functional concepts and SC/CS and their capabilities (Joint Operations Concepts, 2003).

The lower-level operating concepts along with the joint operating concepts can be used as starting points in defining the structure budgeted or in the project phase that will act to operate in the new operating environment, the future capabilities needed by the armed forces of today or as basis for the military doctrines review or development. Thus, these concepts identify a current or future challenge and propose a solution to improve the joint force’s ability to meet that challenge, including through new ways of employing the joint force, but using future technologies.

The operating concepts development is based on the results of strategic level studies on the global change trends in various domains (human, societal, environmental, technological etc.) for the long-term horizon (15-20 years), the influence of these changes on the future operating environment, the reasons why wars are fought, how future operations will be conducted, the actors involved and the capabilities used. The development and validation of these concepts is usually done under the coordination of force development structures existing at the strategic commands level, J-7 type structures, using a common framework for the entire armed forces structure.

OPERATING CONCEPTS AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Of all the military concepts available in the public space, the most important ones, from this article perspective, can be considered NATO and EU concepts – operating concepts with direct applicability to the Romanian Armed Forces, those of the armed forces with a tradition in developing this type of concepts, such as the USA, UK, France and other Western states – pioneers in concept and military capabilities development, as well as those of potential direct or indirect adversary

states (Russia, China, Iran, North Korea etc.), all these concepts being mandatory elements of study in order to identify future potential challenges, problems and solutions.

NATO military concepts are important for the Romanian Armed Forces as they are determining elements in establishing the Romanian Armed Forces employment and the required capabilities in an allied context. They are developed on the basis of the strategic directions from NATO strategic concept, the defence ministers’ political guidelines and NATO military strategy. The latter, together with the military implementation concepts developed at NATO strategic command level⁵, establish the new military-strategic level baseline for the use and development of the Alliance’s military instrument (Tammen, 2020).

The Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA), the military concept developed by ACO, operationalizes the NATO military strategy so that the Alliance can face the dynamics and complexity of today’s security environment. A classified document approved in 2020, the DDA outlines how the Alliance uses the military tool, aligning it with the requirements of modern warfare, strengthens the Alliance’s defensive posture and its defensive role, sets NATO’s military priorities and a new strategic-level approach against current and future threats.

The NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC) is the military concept developed by ACT for the development of the Alliance’s military tool over a period of 20 years. Approved in 2021 and dubbed *NATO’s Military North Star*, the NWCC provides an agreed long-term vision for NATO’s military adaptation and supports the Alliance’s efforts in developing military forces, identifying capability gaps, and making recommendations to meet future requirements. It describes the future operating environment with a focus on threats and the changing character of warfare, suggests a “*push-pull*” approach to modernize what the Alliance already has and to maintain and build advantage where needed to stay ahead of the threat curve. NWCC aims to out-think, out-excel, out-fight, out-pace, out-partner and out-last any adversary or threat through its functional design; establishes

⁵ Allied Command Transformation – ACT and Allied Command for Operations – ACO.



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the imperatives needed to organize and synchronize warfighting development efforts: cognitive superiority, layered resilience, influence and force projection, cross-domain command, and integrated multi-domain defence⁶, all with critical enablers of data, technology, agility, people, preparation and integration.

It should be also mentioned here that there is a new NATO military concept under development – the Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) concept. Jointly developed by ACT and ACO, the concept is to be tested and validated in future exercises and training sessions to ensure the integration of the two new operational domains – space and cyber – at the speed, intensity and agility that NATO must use to maintain its advantage.

As for military concepts at the EU level, they mirror to some extent the concepts developed and implemented at NATO level, mainly because a large part of the EU states are NATO members and they have unique NATO-EU force packages. However, the structural and functional particularities of the EU imply different approaches. The EU Strategic Compass, the specific strategic directions and the framework created by the European Defence Fund (EDF), the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP), the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), all influence the way in which EU concepts are applicable to actions, where the use of the military instrument and its capabilities are involved and how they are developed and validated.

The EU Military Staff, through the Concepts and Capabilities Directorate, is responsible for the concepts, doctrines, planning and capability development, for cooperation with the European Defence Agency (EDA) and for ensuring coherence between EU military concepts and crisis management procedures⁷. The EU family of concepts includes mainly concepts regarding the mode of action and the capabilities of the military rapid reaction forces established based on the Framework

⁶ Allied Command Transformation, *NATO Warfighting Concept*, <https://www.act.nato.int/our-work/nato-warfighting-capstone-concept/>, retrieved on 28 September 2023.

⁷ European Union External Action, *European Union Military Staff: Concepts and Capabilities Directorate*, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-union-military-staff-concepts-and-capabilities-directorate_en#top, retrieved on 28 September 2023.

Nation Concept (battle groups, maritime, air rapid reaction forces etc.), supplemented by several institutional and functional concepts (force generation, C2, intel, logistics etc.). Recently, however, there have been discussions regarding two concepts necessary for the implementation of the Strategic Compass: the military framework for security and defence and the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity respectively.

Among Western nations, the US Armed Forces is the organization that has probably had the most interesting evolution of operating concepts in recent times, starting with the “AirLand Battle”⁸ and continuing with the series of operating concepts that led to the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO)⁹. Even if its last capstone concept variant is classified, the content of the previous variants gives us a general idea of its purpose and content.

CCJO is the concept that, together with the National Military Strategy (NMS), represents the military approach of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to the implementation of the National Security Strategy (NSS). Hierarchically above all joint and SC concepts, this concept represents the CJCS vision of the future US joint force and provides the content, role, and coherence needed in the future force design and development process over an 8-20-year time horizon¹⁰. Starting from the directions established by the NSS, the National Defence Strategy (NDS) and the NMS, from the characteristics of the future operating environment¹¹ and from the military problem to be



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⁸ AirLandBattle (ALB) – a concept implemented starting 1982 to operationalize the “containment” strategy and defeat the Soviet Union through the use of synchronized air and ground operations, impetuous manoeuvre, deep battlefield operations and a tempo to defeat the numerically superior Soviet force, with emphasis on operational level military actions. James L. Cook, *The Importance of Joint Concepts for the Planner*, (2020), <https://www.459arw.afrc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2421510/the-importance-of-joint-concepts-for-the-planner/>, retrieved on 28 September 2023.

⁹ Joint Vision-JV 2010 in 1996, Joint Operations Concepts – JOpsC in 2003, CCJO: Joint Force 2020 in 2012 and CCJO: 2030 in 2018.

¹⁰ The main stages of this process related to the future joint force are force employment (operate) – with a time horizon of 0-3 years, force development (adapt) – with a time horizon of 2-7 years and force design (innovate) – with a time horizon of 5-15 years. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/MECC2019/mecc2019day1brief6_jointfutures_concepts.pdf?ver=2019-10-17-143319-517, retrieved on 28 September 2023.

¹¹ NSS, NDS, NMS and the Joint Operational Environment (JOE) study are distinct documents, developed by institutions located at different hierarchical levels of authority (US President, Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the intelligence community, under the coordination of J -7).



US operating concepts describe how the joint force commander will conduct operations within an operational-level campaign, applying CCJO in solving a specific military problem (current operations, defence support to civil authorities, peacekeeping operations, major joint operations etc.).

solved, CCJO establishes the central idea and some supporting ideas, the multipurpose DOTMLPF¹² appropriate solution for a distinct set of challenges and future operational problems, the main directions of development and use of the assembled force, and the fundamental actions necessary to fulfil the missions under the conditions of the integration of own efforts with those at the inter-agency and multinational level (unified/integrated action). Subject to an extensive and long-term process of experimentation and several revisions, once fully matured, this concept is implemented as the joint doctrine of the US Armed Forces¹³.

US operating concepts describe how the joint force commander will conduct operations within an operational-level campaign, applying CCJO in solving a specific military problem (current operations, defence support to civil authorities, peacekeeping operations, major joint operations etc.). These concepts identify the challenges, the basic capabilities required and the conditions under which these capabilities are to be used, while establishing the operational context for the development and experimentation of support concepts (functional, facilitation, integration etc.) and the operational capabilities required to meet military objectives and ensuring the contribution to the achievement of strategic objectives. From the series of recent operating concepts, it is worth mentioning the JOAC¹⁴ operational concept and the SC MDO, DMO, JADC2 and EABO¹⁵ concepts, as significant examples for deepening the subject of operating concepts.

It should be noted that with the implementation of the NMS in 2018, there has been a significant change in the conceptual approach to future US operations following the strategic direction that the

¹² Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities and Interoperability.

¹³ The latest edition of the US Armed Forces's capstone doctrine presents the fundamental principles and general guidance for the employment of US armed forces in two volumes: "JP-1 vol. 1 - Joint Warfighting" and "JP-1 vol. 2 - Joint Force" published in August 2023 (classified document) and June 2020, respectively.

¹⁴ Joint Operational Access Concept – joint concept for operational access, concept created and used by the US since 2012 to respond to the challenge/problem of operational access in an area where an anti-access and area denial (A2AD) strategy is used.

¹⁵ The US Services operating concepts (SC): the US Army Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) (initiated in 2013, became doctrine in 2022); the US Navy Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO); the US Air Force Joint All-Domain Command & Control (JADC2); the US Marine Corps Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO).

assembled force should be capable of competing below the level of armed conflict, in response to future attempts at hybrid actions such as "green men", "armed militias", disinformation campaigns¹⁶ etc. As a result, the development of the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC) was initiated and the process of developing capabilities required by the concept (Concept-Required Capabilities-CRC) was moved to a concept-driven and threat-informed process of developing capabilities governed, similar to NATO.

Consonant to NATO and the USA, the development of military concepts used by the UK Armed Forces is done starting from the strategic context, future scenarios, areas where profound changes for humanity will take place, threats and long-term opportunities identified by the study of global strategic trends (GST) and future operating environment (FOE)¹⁷.

According to the Ministry of Defence report produced as part of the Security, Development and Foreign Policy Review process¹⁸, the UK Armed Forces will become a threat-oriented integrated force with a continuous change in thinking across the five operational domains: land, sea, air, space and cyber.

The Future Force Concept (FFC) presented in 2017 combines the operating concepts specific to the operational domains into a single document, with the aim of guiding the development of the future force in a coherent manner and promoting a united mindset for a common purpose, beyond the current horizon of policies and resources. It places the concept in a continuum of conceptual thinking whose perspective is spanning a 30-year timeframe and it is meant to coherently guide the development of the future force (figure 2).

¹⁶ Dryad Global, *No Ordinary Boats: Cracking The Code On China's Spratly Maritime Militias* (2021), <https://channel16.dryadglobal.com/no-ordinary-boats-cracking-the-code-on-chinas-spratly-maritime-militias>, retrieved on 28 September 2023.

¹⁷ UK *Global Strategic Trends* – GST, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-strategic-trends> and UK *Future Operating Environment* – FOE, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-operating-environment-2035>, retrieved on 28 September 2023.

¹⁸ *Defence in a Competitive Age* (2021), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-in-a-competitive-age>, retrieved on 28 September 2023.



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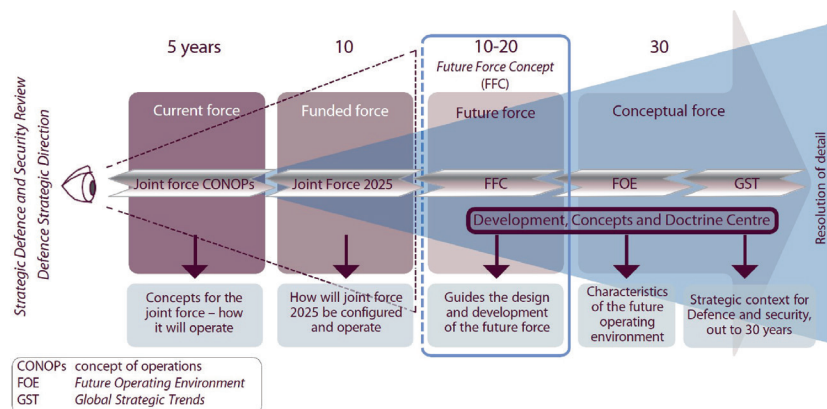


Figure 2: Future force development continuum
(Joint Concept Note 1/17 – Future Force Concept, 2017)

The content of the FFC includes references to the future strategic context and operating environment (planning horizon 2035), to the joint action mode, to the characteristics, challenges and opportunities of the operating domains, to the inferred elements that can be used in a coherent future force development.

Like the other concepts presented here, the content of the FFC includes references to the future strategic context and operating environment (planning horizon 2035), to the joint action mode, to the characteristics, challenges and opportunities of the operating domains, to the inferred elements that can be used in a coherent future force development. Aimed at understanding the future operating environment, the FFC concept has been recommended for study and understanding by all involved in policy and strategy formulation or military capability development and acquisition, commanders and staff, including military students. Even if it was developed based on documents issued in 2015, which are no longer up to date, the approach and principles the FFC was built on and promoted are worth remembering.

Currently, the development of the UK's armed forces is based on the Integrated Operating Concept (IOpC) published for the first time in 2020¹⁹. IOpC was designed to respond to the challenge of a strategic context where the lines of peace-war, public-private, external-internal affairs, state-non-state are increasingly blurred, and where strategic competition has become a continuous engagement with instruments of military and non-military power used without restriction by authoritarian regimes, with no demarcation between peace and war.

Taking this challenge into account, IOpC sets out a new, transformational approach in which the armed forces must prove

¹⁹ Integrated Operating Concept, The Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre (2021).

useful in this strategic competition on the brink of war, while they are able to cope with a way of waging a war whose character can change very quickly. IOpC specifies that the integrated actions in all five domains (multi-domain integration – MDI) – must also be done at the tactical level, extending the joint character below the operational level, in order to create the multi-domain effect. At the same time, the concept requires that the military instrument should be integrated into the total national enterprise (fusion doctrine²⁰).

To that end, the IOpC is based on an Integrated Operating Framework²¹ (IOpF) where a distinction is made between the military activities of “operating” and “warfighting”. According to the IOpF, the forces must be able to adapt to operating at different gradual levels of combat capability (readiness), while maintaining a reserve of forces, including that constituted by mobilization, optimized for fighting. This differentiation between operating and waging war represents a fundamental shift in military philosophy that requires very different thinking about the use of the military tool, the development of appropriate forces and capabilities, and the development of doctrine that allows for decisive competitive action against an adversary that does not distinguish between peace and war.

The MDI concept²² (figure 3), an experimental 2020 British concept based on the IOpC, which deals with the integration of military capabilities with other instruments of national power across all operational domains and at all operational levels (strategic, operational,



Figure 3: Multi-domain integration
(Joint Concept Note 1/17, ib.)



The MDI concept, an experimental 2020 British concept based on the IOpC, which deals with the integration of military capabilities with other instruments of national power across all operational domains and at all operational levels (strategic, operational, tactical).

²⁰ Fusion Doctrine was introduced in the National Security Capability Review (NSCR), 2015, p. 10. The NSCR describes the UK's collective approach to national security and provides the rationale and purpose of Fusion Doctrine, but does not explain its practical application. *The Orchestration of Military Strategic Effects* (2021).

²¹ Integrated Operating Framework, Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre (2021).

²² Joint Concept Note 1/20 – Multi-Domain Integration (2020).



tactical). It also provides a vision for developing an integrated force for 2030 and beyond, within the broader context of government, private sector and Allies integration. MDI uses four tenets (information advantage, strategically posture, configured for the environments, creating and exploiting synergy), aims to integrate, synchronize and lead joint operations based on joint functions (C2; intelligence; fire, information, manoeuvre and outreach; resilience; support), with the unstated aim of maximum integration at all levels and of all actors involved in order to reach, ideally, fusion.

For the correct understanding of this concept, several important aspects related to the meaning of some terms must be specified. First, the MDI uses the term “cyber and electromagnetic operational domain” to integrate activities in the cyber domain with those in the electromagnetic spectrum in a single domain; second, the MDI uses the term environment rather than operational domain to define where military activities take place; third, but not least, MDI should not be confused with MDO, the latter a US military concept with a narrower applicability that does not encompass the role of the military instrument in the broader system of the national level.

The inclusion of IOpC and MDI concepts in the new UK defence doctrine²³ demonstrates that these concepts have moved from experimental to mature concepts level, meant to provide clarity when discussing strategic competition.

All the above shows that in the contemporary operating environment, the “joint” approach – specific to the operational level – may no longer be comprehensive enough, making it necessary to use a new approach, which allows integration from strategic to tactical level – the multilevel approach.

OPERATING CONCEPTS IN THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES

It can be considered that the fundamental transformation of the Romanian Armed Forces was initiated at the beginning of the new millennium with the implementation of the Romanian Armed Forces Transformation Strategy (STAR 2007), a series of actions

and activities related to the sizing, training, and equipping of the Romanian Armed Forces to participate in future operations and which mainly aimed at the transformation of forces, concepts, and capabilities. The transformation process, theoretically in its last stage now (2016-2025) – the stage of full integration into NATO and the European Union, has taken place in close correlation with the transformation process of the Alliance, based on a medium and long-term vision and the stages established by STAR 2007.

The military transformation aimed at the development and integration of new concepts, strategies, doctrines, and capabilities with the aim of improving the efficiency and degree of interoperability of the forces and adapting to changes in the security context. The achievement of the transformation objectives was conditioned by the development of a coherent and viable research and experimentation programme, the validated concepts being transposed into requirements and plans, through the defence planning process, and incorporated into procurement and training programmes.

The concepts currently used by the Romanian Armed Forces come from a series of documents developed at different leadership levels and at different moments (extended national security/NDS20, credible defensive capability/NMS00, strategic credibility/NMR16 etc.) and cover the whole range of the concept hierarchy: strategic and military, national and multinational.

Each of them have their role in the Romanian Armed Forces design and development on different levels: the strategic concepts describe the main ways of using the armed forces in the operationalization of the Military Strategy of Romania and define the ways in which the armed forces will be structured, equipped and trained²⁴; the institutional concepts resulting from the National Defence Strategy (NDS) and the Defence White Paper (WP) describe the way in which the Romanian Armed Forces contribute to ensuring national security in the context of the implementation of the extended security concept; operating concepts define the practical application of military art and science and highlight how the armed forces act to implement institutional



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²⁴ Romania's Military Strategy/Strategia Militară a României – military security through: credible defensive capability; restructuring and modernization; strengthened operational partnership; gradual integration – 2000 (SMR00).

²³ Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01 – UK Defence Doctrine (2022).



CND is formally presented for the first time in WP21 as the main direction of action for the development of capabilities, so that later NMS21 establishes CND as the fundamental operating concept in the period 2021-2024 and identifies IJF – the integrated operating concept.

concepts at strategic, operational and tactical levels; functional concepts describe the mode of action of the armed forces in specific/specialized fields (NMS16).

The operating concepts, briefly defined in NMS16 and presented in a separate chapter of NMS21, have experienced continuous development, both in terms of presence and weight in the national space. The most relevant for the present paper are the concept of consolidated national defence (CND) and the of integrated operating concept – the Integrated Joint Force (IJF).

CND is formally presented for the first time in WP21 as the main direction of action for the development of capabilities, so that later NMS21 establishes CND as the fundamental operating concept in the period 2021-2024 and identifies IJF – the integrated operating concept. Based on the conclusions of the 2020 Defence Strategic Analysis (DSA20) and the results of ongoing studies on long-term forecasts of the security and operating environment²⁵, the CND and the IJF can identify future military and operational problems and provide the specific solution, thus supporting the implementation and revision of the 2040 Romanian Armed Forces Transformation Programme. In turn, the two concepts can provide the conceptual framework for the development and experimentation of lower-level operating concepts (for the military actions of the Services and Supporting Commands/SC&CS, functional concepts, enabling/integration concepts), provides the basis for the development of new capabilities through DOTMLPFI solutions and describes how to conduct joint operations in an inter-institutional and multinational context for the entire range of missions and operations.

Being detailed in NMS21, the content of the two concepts will not be included here. Instead, some considerations related to these and similar international concepts will be presented. Even though the two concepts must take into account national legal constraints or other limitations, they can be inspired by elements of the concepts presented

²⁵ Most of the states perform studies and forecasts on the future operating environment: the JOE 2040/ US; GST & FOE/ UK and their Spanish equivalents (Panorama of geopolitical trends. Horizon 2040/Operating Environment 2035). ACT periodically performs strategic studies and forecasts on the future security environment over a 20-year horizon (NATO Strategic Foresight Analysis – SFA) to identify trends and associated implications on the operational environment. A new NATO cycle was initiated in 2022, <https://www.act.nato.int/activities/allied-command-transformation-strategic-foresight-work/>, retrieved on 22 October 2023.



Due to its model of integrating military capabilities with capabilities of other instruments of national power at different levels (operational domains, levels of warfare, interagency, allied etc.), MDI can help effectively translate CND and IJF into reality.

above. One of the main arguments for it is that the CND and IJF must align or at least have a common denominator with similar NATO and EU concepts (DDA, NWCC, MDO, Rapid Response Force). Likewise, the results obtained in the process of developing and validating these concepts or other national concepts can be used in the Romanian Armed Forces concept development process using a comparative and parallel approach.

Thus, taking into account that the CND ensures a unified vision of conducting operations in the future, it can be appreciated that there are similarities between the CND and the US CCJO, especially in terms of the joint force, a situation that favours making comparisons and analogies and, why not, adopting common or similar approaches and solutions (such as moving from the concept required capabilities/CRC development process, to the concept-driven, threat-informed capability development process). However, the uncovered areas where similarities with other elements can be identified – such as the UK IOPF approach or IOP concepts and the circumscription of public and private sector activities to military ones.

In the case of the IJF concept, a CND based-concept, the imperatives and critical enablers presented by the NWCC or the requirements of the EU family of concepts for the military rapid response force can be taken into account in order to ensure the minimum conditions necessary for conceptual integration and interoperability at allied and EU level. An outstanding positive contribution to the IJF and CND development can be made by UK's MDI²⁶ concept. Due to its model of integrating military capabilities with capabilities of other instruments of national power at different levels (operational domains, levels of warfare, interagency, allied etc.), MDI can help effectively translate CND and IJF into reality. Obviously, the adoption of the MDI must be done taking into account the national particularities, especially the compatibility between the MDI terms and the Romanian doctrinal ones.

Starting points in the process of designing and developing the future force and capabilities of the Romanian Armed Forces, the content of the CND and IJF has a determining role both in the future budgeted or planned force (the force in development) and the one in the design stage (the project force and the conceptual force).

²⁶ Multi-domain integrated actions are one of the imperatives of NMS21.



To inform programmatic documents like NDS, Defence White Paper or NMS for their 4-5-year time horizon and the Defence Planning Directive for its 10-year time horizon respectively, as well as to ensure coherence and continuity on the resource-programme-capability relationship beyond these time horizons, it could be useful to implement the UK development continuum model for the Romanian Armed Forces development cycle (*figure 2*). The adoption of such model would provide a sum of advantages, as follows: facilitates the alignment and synchronization of the national development process with those existing in other NATO or EU states; allows the establishment of long-term research-development-innovation programmes that stimulate in-depth scientific research and create the necessary conditions for the defence industrial base adaptation to new technologies and to new technology development; provides more time for new operating concepts and technologies development, experimentation and validation process; informs the process of education and training for the next generations of military personnel, so that they will be prepared for the full understanding and effective use of conceptual and technical novelties; extends the planning horizon up to 30 years so it can cover the entire lifecycle of the main combat platforms (ships, aircrafts, tanks etc.) and provide guidance for planning their mid-life upgrades.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

As it has been shown so far, operating concepts occupy a well-defined place and have an important role in the future military forces and capabilities development of a state and implicitly for the alliances they are a part of.

The changing character of the operating environment obliges these forces to change the way they use current and future capabilities through a continuous process of transformation and adaptation. Operating concepts and the subsequent ones address the future problems of the environment where the joint force operates in, proposing material and non-material solutions that lead to the fulfilment of objectives and missions in future situations defined by a certain set of parameters (type of mission, operating environment, type of force, level of warfare etc.). The multitude of operating concepts existing at the international level have a number of characteristics that define,

differentiate or resemble them (integrated forces, multi-domain operations and activities etc.), characteristics that can be used in the development and validation of one's own national concepts.

Theoretically in its final stage, the Romanian Armed Forces transformation can seize the opportunity of this moment and start a new development cycle on new bases and principles, common with allied or partner armed forces, where the already existing programmes – *Armata 2026* and *Armata 2040* – could be adapted and integrated. The implementation of a common hierarchy of operating concepts and the assimilation of new approaches and concepts in use by Romania's allies and partners, simultaneously with the transition to a new continuum for future forces development are some proposals that can also contribute to the Romanian Armed Forces development.

Moreover, the recent changes in the security and operating environment, the adoption of new strategic concepts and the future national defence planning documents triggered by the 2024 presidential elections are additional arguments to initiate work on a new transformational strategy to ensure the Romanian Armed Forces development on modern, western foundation and to prepare them for the challenges of the future operating environment. Developed as a public document, such strategy would help a larger audience to better understand the place and role of national defence and the military body within society, the importance of national resilience, would stimulate the appetite and level of involvement of public and private sector partners and the population in this field, including by operationalizing the operating concepts and transforming them into reality.

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