



A PERSPECTIVE REGARDING THE ADAPTATION OF ROMANIAN JOINT COMMAND MASTER'S PROGRAMMES TO THE CURRENT CHALLENGES OF THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

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This year marks the 135th anniversary of the establishment of the Higher War College, whose tradition is continued by "Carol I" National Defence University. Over the years, this school has trained many renowned commanders of the Romanian Armed Forces, the relevance of the study programme being ensured by the continuous improvement of the educational process in line with the philosophies of combat and the specificities of armed conflicts.

Today, we are witnessing a profound transformation of our society, which has a direct impact on the way armed forces operate. In an information and digital age that has fundamentally transformed the way of communication, in which the main function of information has changed from knowledge to influence, in an environment where new technologies shape our current way of life and autonomous systems are increasingly present in armed conflicts, military education cannot but keep pace and adapt to these requirements in order to maintain its societal relevance and ensure the timely preparation of the future commanders of the Romanian Armed Forces.

These are the reasons why the article draws the attention of the Romanian military leadership to the need to transform the main university degree programme of its armed forces in order to effectively fulfil the main function for which it was designed, to prepare and provide highly trained personnel capable of assuming leadership positions and actively contributing to the enhancement of the combat power of the Romanian Armed Forces. This study also proposes some directions to be followed in order to increase the relevance of the curriculum in the current operating environment.

Keywords: education; command master's programme; adaptation; generation Z; operating environment;

A.N.: The results of this study are subjective and do not represent the official position of "Carol I" National Defence University. I believe that the Ministry of National Defence's competent factors can evaluate the proposals contained in this study, which can serve as a foundation for transforming the joint command master's programmes management.



Motto:

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

Nelson Mandela

"War is not an affair of chance. A great deal of knowledge, study and meditation is necessary to conduct it well".

Frederick the Great

INTRODUCTION

"Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world", said Nelson Mandela, the politician. Its potential to prepare individuals, to shape characters and perceptions, to transform, even indirectly, the whole of society, makes education an essential tool for the progress of humanity. Education makes a fundamental contribution to the human beings maturing and shaping not only by developing the capacity for critical thinking and analysis with a view to correctly identifying problems, but also by providing the potential for developing innovative solutions to solve them, based on the critical and creative skills acquired through the educational process. School ensures the transmission of knowledge, skills and values (attitudes), all of them being crucial elements in the formation and development of individuals.

The military, as an integral part of society, cannot but recognise the importance of education. In the defence system, it is one of the four pillars of training (figure 1), the broad area dedicated to preparing armed forces for planning and successfully conducting military operations.

Training is the second most important military activity for the armed forces after actual combat operations (Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 7, 2013, p. Foreword). It is a continuous process whose role is to ensure that the military structure is operational to respond to existing

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threats. Therefore, education, as a basic component of the Romanian Armed Forces training process, must be carried out in accordance with the strategies and standards of the Ministry of National Defence, constantly reflecting its operational needs. In this regard, military education must be a fundamental pillar of the Romanian Armed Forces transformation.

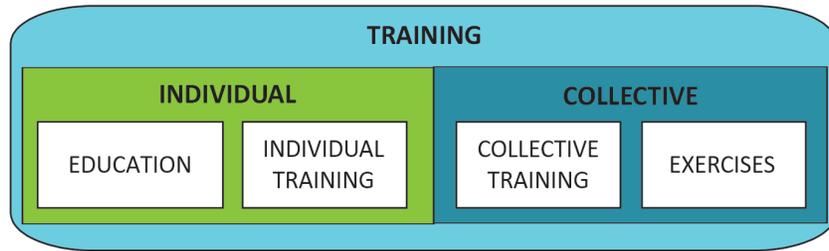


Figure 1: The pillars of force training
(Bi-SCD 075-007 Education and Individual Training Directive, 2015, p. 8)

The evolution of the security environment in the proximity of Romania, the accelerated technologization of all sectors of society, the increased complexity of the current operational environment, the changing character of armed conflicts, as demonstrated by the ongoing one in Ukraine, pose new adaptation challenges for the Romanian military system.

The evolution of the security environment in the proximity of Romania, the accelerated technologization of all sectors of society, the increased complexity of the current operational environment, the changing character of armed conflicts, as demonstrated by the ongoing one in Ukraine, pose new adaptation challenges for the Romanian military system. In this context, military education, as a critical component of this system, must recognise all these elements and take them into account in the planning and implementation of military education, the modernisation of which being also one of the six main lines of action highlighted in the *Romanian Military Strategy* (2021, p. 29).

In this context, the article analyses perhaps the most important education programmes in the career of the Romanian officer, the joint command master’s programme, carried out within “Carol I” National Defence University. In addition, I have chosen to analyse this form of training based on my six-year experience, two as a Master’s student officer and four as an instructor, in the Faculty of Command and Staff, which manages the study programme. Consequently, the results of the study are the product of an empirical approach.

The research problem that I have identified is that the multiple transformations of our society, and implicitly of the operational



environment specific to contemporary conflicts, may contribute to the diminishing relevance of this study programme if it is not adapted correctly and in due time. In addition, we are currently witnessing a generational shift in potential students. Thus, *Generation Z*, the one born between 1996 and 2012 (Dascălu, 2024, p. i), has certain specificities that require a thorough analysis and adaptation of the joint command master’s programmes in order to respond effectively to the needs of the beneficiaries and to exploit the specific positive aspects.

The importance of this problem is crucial for the future of the Romanian Armed Forces, given the impact of the command master’s programmes on officers’ careers. Time is an essential element in this process. I appreciate that now is the right moment to start this analysis, as the results of my research have the potential to contribute to the definition of future directions of adaptation of this study programme. Thus, the recalibration can contribute to maintaining its relevance in the current security environment through the effective preparation of future commanders, considering that Romania has the means and the potential to have an excellent military education system.

In this context, **the purpose** of the study is twofold. Firstly, to demonstrate the need for a transformation of the university command master’s programmes and, secondly, to offer possible directions of evolution, based on a heuristic approach, which will ensure their correct adaptation to the challenges of the current operating environment.

The main target of the study is represented by the decision-makers within the Romanian military system: the study is also addressed to all the academic and auxiliary staff of “Carol I” National Defence University, directly or indirectly involved in the educational process carried out within the command master’s programmes.

Due to its exploratory nature, **the research methodology** is **qualitative**, attempting to capture in depth the need for adaptation of the analysed study programme. Also, **the reasoning** used is **inductive**, leading to the formulation of the general conclusions, based on the observations and data analysed (Given, 2008, p. 429), in line with the purpose of the study.

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In relation to the methodological options presented above, the research is not aimed at validating and testing hypotheses, but is guided by **two main research questions**:

- *What are the arguments for the need to adapt the joint command master's programmes?*
- *How can the joint command master's programmes be adapted to the current challenges of the operating environment?*

In terms of **sampling**, I have chosen to use secondary data to identify the need as well as a possible way to adapt this university degree programme, as their importance in qualitative research is recognised by experts in the field (Birks, 2015, p. 112). Furthermore, in line with this option, the method of **collection** has been document analysis. Also, comparative analysis, a method specific to qualitative research (Given, p. 100), has allowed me to examine similar curricula of some of the Romanian partners in order to identify adaptive solutions based on a heuristic approach.

The structure of the article is modelled on the stated purpose and attempts to provide answers to the two main research questions. Thus, I have first conducted an analysis of the role of the joint command master's programmes in military education and careers, in order to demonstrate the importance of the chosen research topic. Subsequently, I have carried out a study of the main characteristics of the operational environment and their influence on Romanian military education, in order to determine the need for transformation of the study programme under analysis. Finally, I have constructed a design for its adaptation, including possible solutions for four main lines of effort.

THE ROLE OF JOINT COMMAND MASTER'S PROGRAMMES IN MILITARY EDUCATION AND CAREER

"War is not a random aspect of chance. An immense amount of knowledge, study and meditation is required to conduct it well". (Schraubelt, 2024, p. 16). That is the reason why education is an important component in the development of skills specific to armed conflict, being thus one of the basic pillars of training, as I have already emphasised. Although the latter is recognised in Allied and Romanian

doctrine as central to the realisation of the physical component of combat power, for arguments that are easy to understand I consider that the effects of training have a direct impact on all three components of the combat power of the armed forces (AJP-01, Allied Joint Doctrine, Edition F, Version 1, 2022, p. 49). In addition to developing fighting skills, training can help identify doctrinal areas for improvement, thereby supporting the conceptual component, but it can also provide confidence in combat technique and in one's own forces, achieve group cohesion and build military leaders, all crucial elements of the morale component of combat power.

The role of education, as a component of training, is to provide the skills, knowledge and values that are required by the military in the performance of specific duties, with particular emphasis on communication and thinking skills. At the same time, it enables the military to broaden their horizons by developing a high level of understanding the particular actions and the reasons for their conduct. Friedrich Nietzsche considers that he who understands the purpose of an action will endure any way of solving it. That is why the role of education is crucial, as it complements other forms of training to ensure a deeper understanding of tactical situations and actions. Education also helps to shape individuals and military leaders by creating dilemmas and tactical problems that require them to apply a creative thinking process to develop innovative solutions to the situations created. The ability to operate in uncertain environments and to solve complex problems without pre-defined solutions are also relevant aspects of military education.

In the case of Romania, military education is achieved through *"basic courses, career courses, masteral studies, doctoral studies, postgraduate studies and other professional training programmes"* [Order no. M. 30 on 21 March 2012 (updated), 2012, Art. 67)]. The command master's programme is the most important form of training in the Romanian Armed Forces. Its role is to ensure *"the development of the competences necessary for active officers in the exercise of command over formations and units"* (Ib., Art. 73). Moreover, considering that the command-and-control system is the brain of the military organisation, one can observe the impact



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of an effective programme on the Romanian military system as a whole. Moreover, the process of development and training specific to officers entails a shift from an emphasis on motor, physical qualities in the early stages of the career to a focus on cognitive skills. I appreciate that the **joint command master’s programmes**, which are placed approximately in the middle of the military career, at the earliest in the last two years of the internship in the rank of Captain (Ib., Art. 76), represent **the bridge from the physical to cognitive skills of officers**. That is the reason why it should be emphasised the crucial importance of these programmes in the professional development of Romanian officers.

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If specific procedural knowledge skills are trained in the education system prior to the command master’s programmes, this form of training focuses on specific critical thinking skills that ensure a deep understanding of the processes and actions taken, trying to answer questions such as: “*Why is it done in a certain way?*”, “*What are the principles behind these actions?*”, and “*How do they fit into a bigger picture to create synergistic effects on the battlefield?*” (Ryan, 2016, p. 49). The *joint command master’s* programmes represent the time and place where different branches and specialties understand and deepen their respective roles in combined operations.

ADAPTATION OF THE JOINT COMMAND MASTER’S PROGRAMMES (CM) – WHY?

The armed conflict is the most complex, violent, challenging and dynamic human endeavour (MCDP 7 Learning, 2020, pp. 1-3). The above characteristics are naturally transferred to the process of training for this social phenomenon. Societies in general have made considerable efforts to unravel the mysteries of warfare and to adapt their operational procedures and force structures for effective training. Similarly, understanding the characteristics of the nature and character of war has always been one of the preoccupations of the armed forces.

The first prerequisite for any transformation, however, is an awareness of the need for it. To this end, the present section is devoted to identifying and presenting the main factors in relation to which

I believe such adaptation is necessary. For an effective presentation, I have divided them into two broad categories:

- the features of the current operating environment, including elements specific to the nature of contemporary conflicts;
- the characteristics of the human resources to be admitted to the command master’s programmes.

Features of the current operating environment

Increased competition between major actors with diverging interests is driving the evolution of today’s society towards a multipolar world (Strategic Survey 2022. The Annual Assessment of Geopolitics, 2023, p. 27). **The struggle for global power and dominance** has become increasingly fierce in recent years. In addition, the unprecedented technological developments and the characteristics of the digital and information age in which we live have contributed to the **increased complexity of the current operating environment**. A modern-day paradox is that, although intelligence gathering systems have evolved enormously, the **uncertainty specific to armed conflict is greater than ever**. In this context, **military education needs to redefine its objectives** from the area of delivering knowledge to that of training the military’s ability to think critically, to understand and solve unfamiliar problems, and to operate effectively in this uncertain environment.

Armed conflicts have been an integral part of history since ancient times (Palazzo, 2023, p. 9). They have entailed, in addition to elements that have remained constant in the face of the passage of time, certain evolutionary features. They were part of the character of conflicts. The preparation of armed forces is dependent on a correct understanding of these characteristics. In the following, I will highlight the **main features specific to the character of contemporary conflicts and the way in which they might influence the military education process**.

Mental focus on large-scale combat operations

Recently, we have witnessed a shift in the conflict paradigm from counter-insurgency operations, typical to the beginning of this century, to large-scale combat operations (Nistorescu, 2022, pp. 2-3). This shift is taking place against the backdrop of the trend towards a multipolar



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society and the intensification of the global competition for power and influence among the major players, as I have outlined above. We are also witnessing an acceleration in the rearmament and training of armed forces, which underlines the importance of finding effective solutions in military education as well.

Humans, not machines, will continue to be at the centre of the armed conflict

Even though the technological developments we are witnessing today are fundamentally shaping the way we live, I consider that people, not machines, will continue to be the central element in armed conflicts. It is expected, even though technology has evolved enormously, that the human dimension will remain a fundamental feature in the way wars are fought. In this regard, the level of training, experience, education, character, morale and cognition will continue to remain critical elements in the way conflicts evolve. Although technology has shaped many of the processes specific to the military domain, the ability to correctly identify not only the operational problems but also the solutions to them, including the decision-making process will remain specific to the human dimension. That is the reason why the human resource education will continue to remain a very important factor in the armed forces training.

The importance of tactical and operational levels of war and the synchronisation of actions and effects between them in all domains of operations

The ability of armed forces to correctly understand the operational situation and to develop plans that maximise the use of capabilities while exploiting the enemy’s vulnerabilities can be the precondition for operational success in today’s military conflicts. There is an increasing need to synchronise the actions of all the armed forces services in order to achieve convergent effects across all operational domains, which is specific to multi-domain operations. Therefore, understanding how each weapon and service is used operationally and how they interact to enhance their mutual effectiveness is a critical element of contemporary conflicts. It requires a focus on how operations are conducted at both tactical and operational levels, which must also be part of the curricula of each specific institution.

The morale component is highly relevant in the current context

Morale is “an affective state, a temporary state of mind, a temporary disposition of the soul, relating to strength, desire, firmness to endure danger, fatigue, hardship”. (DEX Online, 2024) It plays a crucial role in any armed conflict. In the same vein, leadership is a morale multiplier for troops. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has demonstrated the positive influence of leaders on countless occasions. That is the reason why the theoretical deepening of the concept of leadership as well as the development of leadership skills must be among the priorities of military education. It is clear that modern military operations require leaders who are competent at both tactical and operational levels.

The importance of information in the information environment

Rapid and unprecedented developments in information technology have enabled a level of connectivity and access to knowledge unimaginable just a few years ago. As a result, accurate information has become a vital resource for any warfighter in today’s confrontational environment. Shaping the narrative of actions to influence different audiences has become a central element in the quest for information superiority over the adversary. Given the characteristics of the current information environment, influence operations have gained a privileged place in the operational concepts of most relevant actors.

Technologization of the battlefield

The ability to make decisions faster and more accurately than the enemy, coupled with the development of long-range weapons and the reduction of time to target, are key advantages of the modern battlefield. Today’s technology has had a direct impact on all branches of the military. Whether it is the process of targeting and engagement, intelligence gathering and analysis, or communications and sustaining the operational picture, technology has transformed the way the armed forces operate. In this context, there is a need for training that takes into account the impact of technology on the art of warfare. Technological developments also offer new avenues and tools for education, such as simulation systems, which educational institutions must integrate into the academic process.



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Specific human resource traits

The adaptation of the command master's programmes should also take place in the context of a change in potential students. The next generation, **Generation Z**, recognised as having different characteristics from the previous ones, is imposing a new approach to education, in general, and to military education, in particular (Cilliers, 2017, p. 188). Each generation brings with it particular aspects that are shaped by the social, technological or political context, by events and trends specific to a certain period. All this leads to differences between generations in terms of how they relate to the world, their value system, their opinions and attitudes, and their behaviour. (Dascălu, ib.).

Having lived in a highly developed era in terms of access to technology, Generation Z is highly tech-savvy, deeply engaged in social networks and the internet, and willing to voice their opinions and challenge existing norms. This generation has grown up in a digital environment, being the first to have access to the internet and technology from an early age. The use of social networks is an integral part of their daily lives, with the potential risk of influencing their opinions, as well as their behaviour and even their career choices. All these characteristics pose a number of challenges for the education system. There is much interest in the academic field in understanding the specific characteristics of how individuals learn, in order to optimise and adapt the learning process in relation to the specific characteristics of each generation, in order to meet societal needs (Hernandez-de-Menendez, 2020; Cilliers, 2017; Dolot, 2018; Kuleto et al., 2021). In this context, I appreciate that the Romanian military education should be aware of these generational changes and take measures to streamline the academic process.

ADAPTATION OF THE JOINT COMMAND MASTER'S PROGRAMMES (CM) – HOW?

NATO considers that, *“to maintain military superiority and prevail in future conflicts, Alliance forces must constantly adapt, evolve and innovate”* (Framework for Future Alliance Operations, 2018, p. 22). Adaptation is a prerequisite for the survival of any entity. The coherence between existing doctrines, the specific characteristics of today's conflicts and the specific analytical programmes of different military

education curricula ensures relevance and coherence in the process of force training. Training, and therefore education, cannot remain passive in the face of the new challenges of today's society, in general, and of the operational environment specific to today's conflicts, in particular. Identifying the need for change and developing viable solutions for the development of military education represent integral parts of the adaptation process. It requires a high degree of flexibility, vision and willingness to improve in order to adapt the educational process and maintain its relevance within the military organisation.

As the main form of training in the Romanian Armed Forces, the joint command master's programme requires a comprehensive approach to adaptation. This transformation can only be achieved within a broader adaptation of the entire Romanian military education system. There must be a synchronisation of the competences imparted during each form of training, which implicitly requires a correlation with the level of potential functions that future graduates will be able to perform.

However, the analysis proposed in this article focuses only on the command master's programmes, because I consider that the process of transforming all military education should begin with this degree, given its importance and weight in the knowledge of officers. Subsequently, all other forms of training in Romanian military educational institutions can be modelled on them.

Certainly, the ways in which the command master's programmes can be adapted may vary in relation to the person conducting the analysis. Elements such as military experience, teaching experience, level of familiarity with the curriculum, level of understanding of how the curriculum is currently delivered, as well as the level of understanding of the nature of contemporary conflicts and the characteristics of the operational environment, are elements in relation to which differences in approach may arise.

I have chosen elements of operational design as a way of presenting the adaptation process specific to this programme (*figure 2*). I have identified a desired end state and four Lines of Effort (LoE), which I will describe in the following sections.



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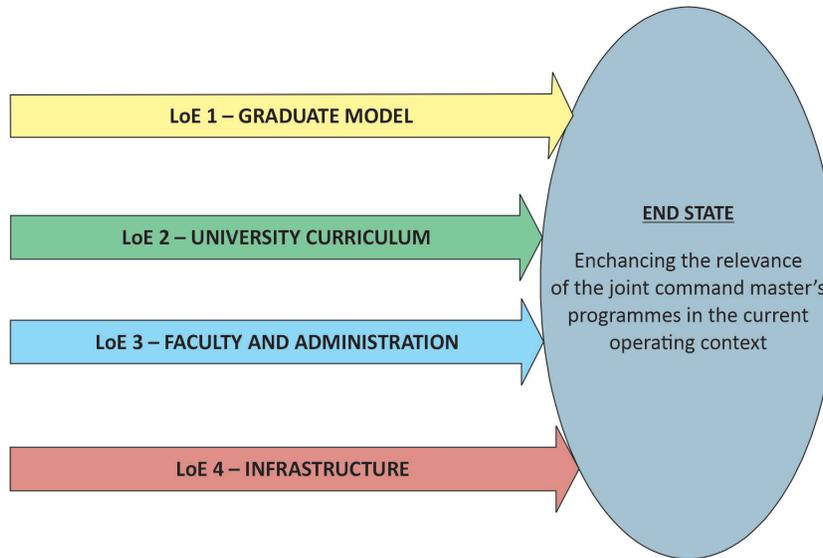


Figure 2: The adaptation of the joint command master's programmes (author's design)

Excellence is an ongoing process and I therefore recognise the importance of continuing the positive elements that have laid the foundations for the extended tradition of the Master of Arts in Interagency Leadership. My proposed design therefore incorporates elements that have already been implemented in this programme and have proved their worth. **The product thus represents a marriage of tradition and innovation**, both aimed at enhancing the relevance of the command master's programmes in today's security environment.

The following four sections describe specific elements of the four strands. I have opted for a tabular presentation in order to ensure that the proposals presented are as accurate and easy to understand as possible.

LoE 1 – Graduate Model

Master's students are the most important image vector of "Carol I" National Defence University. Their importance is crucial in the educational process of the command master's programmes. Understanding the specific elements related to age, level of experience, social aspects should be integrated into the way of organising the educational process. In addition, curricula must reflect elements specific to the nature of today's conflicts and operating environment.



Central to this is the graduate model. It represents a requirement of the beneficiary on how the product of the command master's programmes should look like in order to be useful to the Romanian Armed Forces after graduation.

In *table 1*, I have highlighted the main student-specific aspects in order to adapt the Master's programme to the specific challenges of the current operational environment.

Table 1: Proposals on the adaptation of the Master's degree programme in joint command from the graduate model perspective (author's design)

GRADUATE MODEL	
1.	GRADUATE MODEL
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The graduate model is the concept around which the curriculum and duration of the programme are modelled. In essence, it reflects what the beneficiary wants a potential graduate to look like. In constructing this model, the three domains of learning – Knowledge (knowing), Skills (doing) and Attitudes/Values (being) – should be taken into account.
2.	DEVELOP MILITARY SKILLS FOR THE TACTICAL AND OPERATIONAL LEVELS OF COMBAT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to understand and operate with concepts specific to both tactical and operational levels of operations ensures that officers are best prepared to meet the challenges of today's operational environment. The importance of the tactical and operational levels, and the synchronization of actions and effects between them in all areas of operations drive this educational need.
3.	LEADERSHIP TRAINING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership is an essential component of organisational development and a critical aspect of the morale component of combat power. Leadership is recognised as one of the most important components in the military education process. (Scipanov, 2023, p. 137). Developing adaptive leadership skills (MCDC Future Leadership, 2020, p. 3). Developing self-confidence for all students. Cultivating team spirit. Developing positive character traits: integrity, responsibility, control, mental flexibility, discipline, emotional intelligence, empathy, perseverance etc.



GRADUATE MODEL	
4.	DEVELOPING CREATIVE AND CRITICAL THINKING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building an adaptive mindset based on flexible and innovative thinking. (Scipanov, ib.) • Developing skills to operate in uncertain environments, identifying root causes of problems and developing creative solutions to solve them. • Understanding one’s own cognitive limitations (biases) that may influence decision making. • Developing skills to solve uncertain problems rather than understanding a pre-defined formula that may create extended vulnerabilities.
5.	DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication is essential in all military-specific activities. (Scipanov, ib.). It ensures effective and clear communication of the commander’s vision for solving the operational problem, sets the stage for successful negotiations, and motivates subordinates in critical situations.
6.	DEVELOPING DIGITAL COMPETENCES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the digital age in which we live, the inability to operate military domain information systems and software can lead to increased vulnerability. • In today’s highly volatile environment, gaining the decision advantage over the adversary by accelerating the decision-action cycle (OODA – Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) can also be achieved by maximising the use of various specialised technologies and software to support the critical functions of military operations, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – providing COP (Common Operational Picture) – providing SITAWARE (Situational awareness) – operational planning – decision making; – targeting and engaging by supporting the targeting process; – logistic support planning; – providing electronic communications etc. • An example is the development of skills to understand and operate FASs (Functional Area Services).

LoE 2 – University Curriculum

A university curriculum is a set of subjects and educational content. It can include course structure, educational objectives and teaching and assessment methods. It is derived from the graduate model and represents a transcription of the competences to be trained into study subjects. In *table 2*, I have highlighted the main proposals that I consider appropriate to maintain the relevance of the Master’s degree in the current environment. I also emphasise that some of these elements have already been reflected in the academic curriculum and only require some adjustment.

Table 2: Proposals for the adaptation of the curriculum of the joint command master's programmes (author's design)

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM	
1.	NATURE OF INFORMATION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study both the tactical and operational levels of combat. • The analytical programme specific to the command master’s programmes should include the transmission of knowledge and the training of skills specific to tactical and operational level structures. • It should be correlated with the level of information provided in the other continuous training programmes. • In order to understand the close fight, it is necessary to study Brigade- (similar-) level operations. The operational relevance demonstrated in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the force structure of the Romanian Armed Forces, the potential functions that will be filled after graduation determine the need to study this hierarchical level in depth. • Studying brigade level also provides a solid knowledge base without which it is impossible to study the other higher levels in depth. • Deep fight requires the study of the tactical echelons of Division and Warfighting Corps (WFC) or equivalent. The similarity of the combat modes of these two echelons makes it possible to study them simultaneously. In the study programme dedicated to these two types of structures, specific elements must be taken into account in order to fulfil the three specific functions of their combat: in-depth combat, support for contact combat and protection of the rear. • LCC/MCC/ACC – How to organize and conduct the operations of the component commands of the force services. • Combined Forces Command – provides operational-level knowledge on how to plan and conduct a major operation or campaign.





UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM	
2.	CURRICULUM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust curriculum to reflect the specific operational needs of the current operating environment as well as the specific challenges and features of current conflicts. In this regard, I appreciate the following information as absolutely mandatory for the adaptation of the command master programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tactical level operations planning – brigade, division, combat corps (WFC), LCC/similar. – Operational level operations planning – Combined Forces Command. – Cognitive limitations in decision making. – MDO – Multi-Domain Operations. – Hybrid Warfare. – Risk Management. – Battlespace Management (BM). – Operation preparation – e.g. rehearsals. – Operations execution (rapid decision-making process, battlefield organisation of command, battle tempo, KM process, targeting process, JISR process etc.). – Activities specific to the battle rhythm: CUB (Commander's Update Brief), BUB, INTEL WG/Board, IO WG/Board, Assessment WG/Board, TGT WG/Board, DASM – synchronisation of the operation. – Preparation of specific documents – OPLAN/OPORD, FRAGO, WARNO etc. – Reporting system (R2 – Reports and Returns) – Daily SITREP, INTREP, INTSUM etc. – Military Intelligence – IPB, JIPOE and CUOE processes, IRM&CM, JISR, multi-source information processing and analysis methods, I&W (Indicators and Warning) system. – Information operations – Information Environment Assessment (IEA) process, information operations planning, deception and countermeasures, OPSEC (Operation Security), PSYOPS, CIMIC etc. – Analysis of potential adversaries – organisation, equipment, tactics and procedures. – Leadership – it is essential to instil specific values in order to train future military leaders. – Military art history and military geography. – Geopolitics and Geostrategy (Security Studies). – English.



UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM	
3.	DURATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMMES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The length of the programme should be proportionate to the amount of information to be conveyed during the CM. • Given the information I have presented in the first two points, I consider that a duration of 2 years – 120 credits would ensure the viability of the programme. • In the first two semesters, the tactical level specific to the armed forces structures will be studied in order to respond to their needs, with semesters 3 and 4 focusing on joint level operations. Such an approach, I believe, best meets the need to prepare officers for this form of education. • Although it may seem a long time, the long-term benefits will surely outweigh the investment, given that the Master's degree provides the overwhelming theoretical foundation for the remainder of the military careers. • I also note that this duration is successfully practised in similar programmes in other partner countries.
4.	MULTINATIONALITY OF THE STUDY PROGRAMMES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the relevance of the undergraduate programme, it may also include a multinational component. In this respect, I envisage two lines of action. • Organisation and implementation of exercises with international participation from other similar universities with a similar profile of some of the Romanian partners. • Organisation of a Master's format in English, in which students from Romania's partner countries can also participate. • I appreciate that such an option would contribute to increasing the relevance of Romania's position as a regional security pole.
5.	CONTINUOUS ADAPTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMMES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an institutionalised process of feedback from the Master's students, but also from the force services as the main beneficiaries of the product. • Continuous assessment of changes in the operational environment and armed forces services specific concepts to ensure the operational relevance of the programme. In this respect, a much closer relationship with the beneficiary would be conducive to the improvement of the Master's programme.



LoE 3 – Faculty and Administration

Teaching is a noble art and this statement underlines the importance and value of the act of delivering knowledge in the command master’s programmes. Teaching is more than just imparting knowledge. The role of the faculty is also to build character, to inspire students, and to contribute directly to their formation as competent, highly critical and capable future commanders and staff officers. However, teaching cannot function effectively without a properly sized and well-trained administrative apparatus. *Table 3* highlights the key elements specific to the faculty that should be considered in the command master’s programmes.

Table 3: Proposals on the adaptation of the joint command master's programmes from the perspective of the faculty and administration (author's design)

FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION	
1.	INSTITUTIONALIZED ACADEMIC TRAINING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An essential prerequisite for the educational process is a well-trained and experienced academic staff. This must be a priority for the military institution. For this reason, I personally believe that the young members of the academic staff, because of the subsequent influence they can have and the potential effects they can create in the future, should be part of a priority programme of participation in the main courses abroad relevant to their position. Moreover, their participation as observers in the main training events of the Romanian Armed Forces can contribute significantly to their professional development.
2.	PROFESSIONAL ETHOS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional ethos in education is a set of values, norms, principles and behaviours that govern the work and conduct of the academic staff. Strict adherence to it will result in the behaviour of future commanders being modelled. The teacher – a role model for master’s officers. It will contribute to the training of future commanders, but also to the maintenance of a relationship that will continue after the completion of the studies, ensuring the possibility of sharing experiences in the future. Characteristics required for teachers (MCDP 7 Learning, 2020, pp. 3-16; Dascălu, p. 26): professionalism; selflessness; fairness; respect; communication skills; ability to inspire by personal example; empathy; leadership and mentoring.



FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION	
3.	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevance of the teaching authority at this level can only be maintained by maintaining a high and updated level of expertise and by identifying appropriate methods to create the optimal learning environment for the Master’s officers. It implies the need for the academic staff continuous professional development. This continuous training would also have the potential to inspire future students, as it is known that one of the characteristics of Generation Z is that they feel motivated by teachers who are eager to evolve (Dascălu, ib.). It is also important to facilitate teachers’ access to relevant national and especially international information from NATO networks.
4.	CREATING THE OPTIMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first step in setting up an optimal framework is to determine the level of knowledge of those responsible for the training, and then to present the information in such a way as to ensure that it is optimally absorbed by them and that the training objectives are achieved. Approach the teacher-student relationship with a high degree of mutual respect. Modelling lessons to stimulate students’ creative and critical thinking. The use of Wargaming (WG) in the educational process (Dascălu, p. 20). It is recognised that WG is an undervalued tool in the educational process. There is a growing interest in similar military higher education programmes to use this tool in the educational process (Sullivan, 2020; Ruhnke, 2020; Bartels, 2020). The use of vignette-based situations to develop critical thinking skills in officers to identify optimal solutions to the problem at hand. Force-on-force training has been shown to be a beneficial interactive experience and knowledge-building framework for students (Haydock, 2023; Mankowski, 2017). Making decisions and adapting in the face of a real adversary who is also carrying out the same activities can simulate elements specific to the nature of conflict that are otherwise difficult to replicate, such as uncertainty or friction, thus supporting the training of officers. Interactive organisation of the lessons, involving the trainee officers in the way they are conducted. Use of NATO methods to provide a framework for problem solving. (The NATO Alternative Analysis Handbook, 2017, pp. 17-117).



FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage constructive discussions during class time. • Provide continuous and accurate feedback on the Master’s officers training path to ensure the framework for their adaptation. • Invite experienced military professionals to teach to ensure the correlation between theory and practice.
5.	TEACHER SELECTION AND STAFFING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recruitment of teaching staff must be one of the Ministry of Defence’s employment priorities. • Create conditions for attracting and retaining the best officers in the ranks of the teaching staff, emphasising experience, willingness, level of knowledge and character.
6.	DEVELOPING THE MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG INSTRUCTORS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The training of new instructors from the instructor corps must be a mandatory condition for the Romanian military education system. • In this sense, the implementation of a mentoring programme for young instructors can contribute significantly to their professional training. • Such a programme can also provide a positive and beneficial framework for directed learning.
7.	CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN TEACHING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conditions for a young teacher to develop a teaching career require a considerable effort in the area of research. • Although research has a beneficial role to play in the process of teacher maturation, I appreciate that a greater focus on teaching activities in career development could be much more beneficial to the teaching process. • This proposal is related to an earlier one, specific to the academic curriculum, on the establishment of a department dedicated exclusively to conflict research at tactical and operational levels.
8.	ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONFLICT RESEARCH DEPARTMENT AT TACTICAL AND OPERATIONAL LEVELS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research is essential for development and innovation. • Such a decision would have several positive effects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Firstly, it would relieve faculty from the research component and ensure a better focus on the teaching component.



FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Secondly, it would provide the framework for identifying trends in the evolution of conflicts and could provide valuable information for adapting Romanian military doctrines and, indirectly, military education. – Thirdly, the possibility of staffing this department with Romanian military reservists with extensive experience, so that the military system can benefit from the knowledge they have acquired during their careers.
9.	DEVELOPMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF WITHIN THE FACULTIES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certainly, the functionality of the study programme cannot be achieved without a well-prepared and sized administrative apparatus. • Such a measure would ensure that the teachers would be relieved of administrative tasks and their efforts would be directed to the preparation of teaching activities, which is their essential function.

LoE 4 – Infrastructure

Investment in infrastructure completes the framework for adapting the command master’s programmes. Without a modern infrastructure, properly sized in relation to the needs and the number of students, the fulfilment of the crucial conditions specific to the other three lines of effort will not have the expected effects. The infrastructure must therefore enable realistic and effective practical training to prepare officers for complex and unpredictable scenarios. *Table 4* highlights some important elements related to infrastructure development as a critical requirement for curriculum adaptation.

Table 4: Proposals on the adaptation of the command master's programmes from the infrastructure perspective (author's design)

INFRASTRUCTURE	
1.	DIGITALIZATION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of digital libraries with easy access to documents in electronic format. • Use of FASs (Functional Area Services) in the learning process. • Use of virtual reality systems to support situational understanding and decision making (e.g. systems that can design the battle space in 3D and automatically calculate possible mobility corridors or blind zones etc.).



The main research question addressed in this article is whether the military education, in general, and the command master's programmes, in particular, should adapt to the challenges of the current operating environment and streamline the training of Romanian master's student officers from this form of training.

INFRASTRUCTURE	
2.	EDUCATION COMMAND POSTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of replicas of command posts for all hierarchical levels studied for CM. • These command posts should be organised and technologically equipped similarly to the real ones of the Romanian armed force structures. It would ensure the fulfilment of one of the training principles: <i>“Train as you will fight!”</i>. • Possibility to connect the Command Posts to the JCATS type simulation systems already existing in <i>“Carol I”</i> National Defence University.
3.	MWR (MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION) FACILITIES – OFFICERS CLUB
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As in combat, people need breaks and disconnection to function optimally and perform at their best. • The organisation of an Officers’ Club could provide moral support to Master’s officers during their studies.

CONCLUSIONS

The multiple transformations of the current operating environment, as well as the main characteristics of the society in which we live, overwhelmingly influence the way military education should be conducted. The main research question addressed in this article is whether the military education, in general, and the command master’s programmes, in particular, should adapt to the challenges of the current operating environment and streamline the training of Romanian master’s student officers from this form of training.

In this respect, the study is aimed to ensure the fulfilment of two main objectives. Firstly, to sensitise the main decision makers in the Romanian Armed Forces to the need to adapt the command master’s programmes, and secondly, to provide a practical product for the transformation of this study programme.

The main outcome is a design consisting of four broad areas of effort: the academic curriculum, the faculty, the master’s officer corps and the infrastructure. I appreciate that it can provide an effective framework for the adaptation of the command master’s programmes, providing the prerequisites for high quality military education.



The recalibration of this programme can have multiple benefits. The most important of them is to maintain the relevance of the master’s programme in the new operational environment, thus continuing its long tradition. In addition, to attract personnel to this form of training and to enhance the combat capability of the Romanian Armed Forces by preparing future leaders capable of responding effectively to contemporary challenges, the *raison d’être* of the command master’s programmes.

I am aware that the **process will not be easy**. It will require a **huge collaborative effort** from everyone involved in the change: academic staff, students, support staff. However, with effective communication, continuous monitoring and adaptation, I am confident that **it can be achieved**. We must not forget that the sooner we start, the sooner the effects will have a positive impact on the Romanian military system. That is the reason why I would like to conclude with an exhortation, which is also the motto of *“Carol I”* National Defence University: *“Labor improbus omnia vincit!”*.

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