

THE EVOLUTION AND ROLE OF COOPERATION FOR ORGANIZING AND CONDUCTING MILITARY OPERATIONS

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This article analyses the role and importance of the concept of cooperation in the preparation of military operations and battles, based on studies focused on the conduct of combat actions and command exercises. The evaluation of the conclusions and lessons learned in the military field, from a theoretical and practical perspective, highlights that an effective organization of cooperation occupies an essential place in the preparation of military confrontations. Recent experiences in armed conflicts emphasize that neglecting this distinct aspect in planning and executing combat actions can lead to the failure of missions.

The author focuses on the analysis of relevant sources and the elucidation of significant phenomena and aspects related to the mentioned topic. The results of the study, obtained by examining the factual material and formulating ideas based on the lessons learned, will be valuable for the development of national military art. In conclusion, it is emphasized that military experience has enriched military art with new applicative perspectives and teachings, which will continue to be influenced by the development of modern technologies and the evolution of the operational context and means of combat.

Keywords: armed forces; strategy; physiognomy; cooperation; operational art;

INTRODUCTION

The current regional geopolitical context, which is characterized by the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict and the instability in Ukraine, necessitates a re-evaluation of the functioning of the defensive system. This need is manifested by reconsidering the strategies for deploying forces and resources in the defence system. The confrontation between Western doctrines and elements of Soviet military art is highlighted when analysing various military actions observed during the Ukraine War after the Russian invasion. Particularly relevant is how new technologies are integrated into the modern battlefield, forcing both sides to find innovative solutions to achieve a favourable force ratio and gain strategic and tactical superiority in decisive areas.

As is known, the conduct of war has evolved over time under the influence of the development of society, science, and the refinement of technological processes, which have created premises for the new physiognomy of armed conflict. From this point of view, it can be noted that the evolution of the armed combat at the beginning of the 21st century denotes the configuration of new elements, previously almost negligible or having insignificant impact on the theatres of war.

The conflict in Ukraine has brought attention to new combat methods at all levels of military art, causing essential revisions of strategic and tactical concepts. Analysing conceptual innovations in aviation, cruise missiles, armoured technology, and unmanned aircraft (drones), we note that these technologies are being used intensively by both sides for both surveillance and attack. These developments have not remained without consequences, contributing to the transformation of the physiognomy of the armed struggle and bringing an innovative character to the preparation and conduct of military/combat operations. Both sides must adapt to a particularly difficult situation when using new means in the context of the modern battlefield, which is characterized by extremely varied conditions and situations. We also observe competition in conducting combat actions, in which the forms and contents differ depending on the quality of the forces involved. So far, none of the countries involved in the conflict can be considered a winner and cannot argue that it has fully achieved its political objectives.

At the same time, it can be found that military art evolves in close accordance with technical and scientific progress, which influences the way the armed struggle

is conducted both now and in the future, at the strategic, operational and tactical level. The objectives of the military actions at strategic and operational level are pursued and realized by groups of forces with strategic and operational value, through complex military operations. At the tactical level, the actions are carried out in the form of direct fights.

Therefore, the dynamics of the evolution of military actions requires an evaluation of this conflict, in order to extract the most relevant lessons that can be integrated in the military training of the national armed forces personnel. These lessons are essential and will continue to represent a major interest in the training and preparation process for the deployment of future military actions.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ORGANISATION OF COOPERATION

Following the study and analysis of the history of wars presented in the literature, the essential role of cooperation in organizing and conducting combat actions is highlighted. We should mention that the American military historiography from the period before the Second World War elucidated the concept of cooperation only in general terms, and as a result of these gaps, American forces suffered significant losses in the first phase of the Second World War.

In contrast, the British literature during the war addressed the principle of cooperation in more detail, but its practical implementation was not always appropriate to the situation on the ground. As regards German historiography, the regulation *“The Troops Management”* emphasized cooperation as one of the fundamental tactical principles. In the orders of the command of that period it was strongly recommended to use all necessary resources to ensure effective coordination and punctuality in the performance of missions (Frieser, 2010, p. 370).

In this context, Russian historiography makes solid arguments in favour of the emergence of the first elements of cooperation between different services during the First World War. The development of those elements was intended to study, plan, and coordinate cooperation between military units in operations, a concept that was tested and refined in subsequent conflicts (Воробьев, 2002, p. 129).

The Second World War, characterized by much greater mobility and military actions of considerably greater proportions than those in the First World War, highlighted even more clearly the importance of an effective system of cooperation. During that time, the notion of *cooperation organization* became a central element in planning and conducting military actions, being thus regulated and detailed in the official military documents. We believe that the development of those rules and procedures was essential for the success of complex military operations,

where synchronization between different branches and units became a decisive factor in achieving superiority on the battlefield. Thus, cooperation was no longer an abstract concept, but a fundamental tactical principle, applied at all levels of command and considered vital to achieving strategic objectives.

During the Second World War, the theory and applicability of the organization of cooperation was significantly improved, bringing this concept to a new level. Cooperation became a key element in the preparation and deployment of combat actions, directly contributing to the achievement of operational objectives. The evolution was determined by the need to adapt the military structures to the new realities of the battlefield, in the context of continuous improvement of military technologies. The armed forces' mobility was enhanced by the introduction of mechanized troops and armoured vehicles, and the processes of action evolved to match different types of combat. Thus, the theory of cooperation had to integrate those new trends and provide effective solutions for the rapid and precise coordination of military actions on multiple fronts (Ib., p. 145).

After the Second World War, as well as in local military conflicts, military science, especially military art theory, continued to evolve at the pace of technological progress. It remained an integral component of the preparation and conduct of military actions, being always adapted to the new realities of the battlefield. The modern means of striking and firing have been used in increasingly effective ways, thanks to the adoption of innovative or even previously unknown action processes. In this context, the new military equipment has required clear and well-established procedures for use in combat. These procedures have required a reassessment of the way cooperation is organized, resulting in a new vision that integrates modern resources and technologies into the cooperation system to maximize battlefield efficiency. Thus, the rapid evolution of military means and the complexity of modern operations have created a framework in which cooperation is no longer only an option, but a strategic necessity for the success of military actions.

The new conditions under which military actions are designed and carried out oblige us to carefully re-evaluate the action processes of the forces and means involved. The physiognomy and content of these actions are not constant, but vary depending on the level of technological development of the armed forces and the specific conditions under which the fight is conducted. Determining factors of military action, such as the enemy, geographical space, time available and the ratio of forces, together with the available means, must always be taken into account in the planning and execution process.

An essential element in the conduct of military operations is the principle of continuity. This principle emphasizes that military actions are not isolated events, but are part of a constant process of adaptation and evolution. Continuity means not only maintaining a strategic link between the different stages of a military campaign, but also the ability to integrate past experiences into future planning. Thus, the armed forces must be prepared to adjust their tactics and update their equipment in order to respond effectively to ever-changing scenarios.

The application of the principle of continuity in the organization of military cooperation requires uninterrupted coordination between all elements of force. It guarantees that, regardless of the developments on the ground or the changes in the dynamics of the confrontation, cooperation remains a constant factor, which maximizes the efficiency of the actions. In this respect, the command must be able to anticipate and adapt cooperation plans, ensuring a solid link between the stages of preparation and conduct of operations. This continuity is vital for maintaining operational momentum and avoiding discontinuities that could give the enemy decisive tactical advantages.

The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the evolution and transformations in the conduct of military battles and operations have played a significant role in redefining the strategic planning process. Technological, tactical and strategic transformations have resulted in essential adaptations in military art, bringing profound changes in the way operations are conceived and carried out on the battlefield. These mutations are based not only on technological developments, but also on the experience gained in modern conflicts, which demonstrate the need for dynamic and flexible planning, able to respond quickly to ever-changing circumstances.

Returning to the division of military art in the three distinct levels – strategic, operational and tactical, we can emphasize that, despite the differences between these levels, certain fundamental elements remain constant, such as space and time factors. These two coordinates play a significant role in determining the success or failure of a military operation, regardless of the level at which it is conducted. Space defines the location and mobility of forces, and time influences the ability to react and synchronize, essential aspects in the context of a modern war, characterized by the rapidity of changes and the complexity of operations carried out simultaneously on multiple fronts. Starting from these considerations, the preparation and management of military actions at each of the three levels are carried out according to specific laws, principles, rules and procedures, which vary depending on the scale and complexity of the operation. At the strategic

level, the focus is on long-term planning, resource coordination and setting major goals. At operational level, it aims to manage resources and coordinate units to ensure continuity and efficiency in achieving strategic objectives. Finally, at the tactical level, the focus is on concrete implementation of plans through actions on the ground, where space and time factors are decisive in gaining advantage over the enemy. Thus, each level operates under distinct constraints and opportunities, but the interdependence between them ensures the complex success of military actions.

In the context of armed confrontations, any military action requires multilateral assurance, including the creation of optimal conditions for a thorough preparation of each operation, the strengthening of force groups and the maintenance of an adequate combat capability. This training requires both effective coordination of available resources and rigorous control of military logistics so as to achieve operational objectives. Changes in the nature and structure of armed conflicts have required a deep re-evaluation of the procedures for the transition to various forms of combat, adapting them to new strategic and technological realities.

From the theoretical-applicative perspective, a significant example of these developments is the phrase *organization of cooperation*, which occupies a central place in the preparation and conduct of combat actions. Cooperation between the various units and branches involved in a military operation not only optimises the coordination and efficiency of forces, but also plays a crucial role in the adaptability and flexibility of military actions. The historical study of wars and lessons drawn from past experiences underscores the importance of cooperation as a decisive factor in the success of modern military operations.

Moreover, the applicability of the concept of *cooperation* has been demonstrated in all areas of military art, being illustrated by the way in which troops belonging to different branches collaborate in order to achieve common objectives. This strategic principle has played a decisive role in achieving success on the battlefield, facilitating the synchronization of forces and multiplying the combined effect of various military resources. Thus, the effective organisation of cooperation continues to be an essential pillar in the planning and execution of military actions, having a direct impact on the outcome of armed conflicts.

According to the military lexicon, the concept of cooperation is defined as “*Activity that ensures the coordination of actions of all forces participating in combat (operation), in time, space and missions, and, for the purpose of concentration and summation of their efforts for the performance of a joint combat mission*”. (Military Lexicon, 1994, p. 111).

Military art has its share of controversy and debate, much like any scientific field. Testing and applying certain provisions and theories in real combat contexts is the only way to demonstrate their validity. The dynamic nature of war, in which external and internal variables are constantly changing, creates a framework in which even the most robust principles must be adapted and reassessed based on the results obtained on the ground. Thus, the theory becomes effective only when it can be successfully translated into practice, and its applicability must be proven by means of concrete results of military operations. In this context, a current debate within the military theory is to elucidate the organization of cooperation in the preparation of military actions, a problem that has gained increasing importance in recent literature. Organizing cooperation involves effectively synchronizing resources and forces to maximize the effect of military operations, but this approach requires constant review as new technologies and combat strategies emerge.

Mention should be made that, in the literature, the notion of coordination is a fundamental element, representing the third pillar in the tertiary stage of preparing a military operation. The notion of coordination brings an important clarification in the dynamics of the organization of forces, highlighting the fact that the success of an operation does not depend only on the readiness and execution capacity of each actor involved, but also on how these actors manage to collaborate and adapt to the changes occurred during the conflict. In this context, coordination is not a mere technical mechanism, but an essential component, which ensures the overall cohesion and efficiency of all the resources involved in the action, transforming strategic potential into a concrete reality on the battlefield.

From an etymological point of view, the notion can be analysed through two essential concepts: coordination and cooperation, within the framework of contemporary military planning, these two concepts, treated differently, reflecting varied approaches in the armed forces of modern states. Semantic and conceptual differences between coordination and cooperation often create significant impediments to the preparation of military operations and the effective organization of cooperation between various units and branches. In the absence of precise clarification of these concepts, the planning process risks becoming inefficient, leading to a misunderstanding of how these elements integrate into a military operation.

Starting from this semantic dissonance, we appreciate that conceptual adjustments and clarifications are needed to ensure an effective operationalization of the notion of military cooperation. Currently, a gradual departure from

the classical definition of cooperation is noted, which can lead to difficulties in applying this concept in real military contexts. In this context, our approach is more methodological and didactic, focusing on the need to provide a clear and coherent theoretical framework, facilitating the implementation of cooperation in the planning and conduct of military operations.

Romanian specialists support the idea of conceptual division between coordination and cooperation, although, in the past, in the Romanian military theory, cooperation was considered a stand-alone principle in the armed struggle. The justification for this perspective can be found in the *“Doctrine for Land Forces Operations”*, a fundamental document that was modelled after the main military doctrines of NATO member states, but adapted to the specific of the Romanian army. This doctrine reflects the need to combine own military traditions with the most advanced international practices, constituting a coherent body of knowledge and rules that meet the modern challenges of the battlefield (F.T.-1, 2004).

In a different manner, the mentioned problem is dealt with by Russian military specialists, who exclude the existence of division, finding that, in principle, cooperation is self-contained (Воробьёв, p. 119). It is also considered that one of the important problems of the theory of military art, faced by the applicative part, is represented by the ways of organizing and conducting military actions in the current conditions of the battlefield. We believe that the cooperation of forces and means between different branches is one of the important elements in the preparation and planning of combat actions that are embedded in the spectrum of key elements regarding the characteristics of the orographic system elements, time conditions and weather conditions.

However, to elucidate the concept in terms of the importance and delineation of cooperation from the theoretical-applicative point of view in relation to the levels of military art, we will rely on the content of relations of interaction and interdependence between the components of military art. Therefore, the existence of relations of subordination between the levels of military actions is a necessity dictated by the needs of the battlefield, through which they are manifested, determining the level of activity of the structures in order to organize and maintain cooperation.

In our opinion, cooperation consists in coordinating the combat actions of heterogeneous forces from different military services, branches, as well as neighbouring forces or forces from the relevant ministries over time, space and on missions, in order to successfully carry out joint missions.

Therefore, the *essence of cooperation* lies in the coordination of the actions of forces from different branches in the interest of infantry troops, tanks, sub-units and units acting in the main direction of effort or in the main direction of offensive.

The importance of cooperation lies in the fact that it allows the use of combat capabilities of large units and units, arising from the capabilities of the armament in the inventory. Through cooperation, the vulnerable points of some forces and means complement each other's strong points, thanks to which a significant superiority is achieved in the total action in terms of the effect on the enemy.

Therefore, the *purpose of cooperation* is to make the most effective use of the combat power of the forces of different services and branches involved in combat, concerned with the accomplishment of the mission. Thus, the conduct of the armed struggle provides for the participation of various forces from different services and branches, having combat properties and capabilities that impose new requirements in terms of the organization of cooperation.

In this context, within the framework of national military science, the organization of the cooperation system must be carried out in accordance with essential fundamental principles: *continuity, stability* and *flexibility*. These requirements are essential for ensuring an efficient and adaptable cooperation system in various military scenarios, reflecting both the need for fluid coordination and the ability to react quickly to changes in conflict dynamics. We will present in detail the principles mentioned, as follows:

❖ *Continuity of cooperation* is achieved through permanent knowledge of the situation, maintaining a high level of training of forces, for carrying out missions in a complex situation, by implementing the processes of organizing and improving the system of cooperation in the fight, as well as by ensuring the system of sound management and communication.

❖ *Stability of cooperation* implies knowledge of the real situation, maintaining the capacity of the created system and operating under conditions of use of the means of destruction of the opponent.

❖ *Flexibility of cooperation* lies in the ability to adapt quickly to any situation. It is achieved by taking appropriate measures to change the situation, specifying and presenting new decisions, sub-unit missions, and ways of cooperation.

Thus, the effective organization of military cooperation, in accordance with the principles of continuity, stability and flexibility, is essential for the success of modern operations. This holistic approach ensures both the resilience of the command-and-control system and the ability to adapt to a constantly changing operational environment, which is a strategic advantage in contemporary conflicts.

In military science, the *principle of cooperation* is manifested by the diversity of military actions, which address numerous applicative challenges related to the conduct of armed struggle. These challenges include various tactical forms and processes aimed at increasing operational efficiency and ensuring success in combat and operations. The effectiveness of military actions is closely related to the adaptability to constant changes in the battlefield, as well as the continuous improvement of weapons and combat technique. In this respect, establishing and maintaining adequate coordination between the various elements involved in the operations are crucial to achieving strategic and tactical objectives.

The achievement of these objectives is becoming increasingly important in the current context, where the armed forces involve a diversity of structures and means from different units and military subdomains. It underlines the need for effective cooperation, not only between own forces, but also between those coming from other structures or alliances. Without precise and integrated coordination, loopholes may arise in the conduct of actions, which can significantly reduce the operational efficiency and the ability to respond quickly and decisively to the challenges of the battlefield.

The experience gained in recent armed conflicts gives us clear evidence that a commander's lack of tactical skills is becoming evident especially in his failure to effectively organise and implement cooperation in operations. Cooperation is an essential test for a commander's ability to coordinate multiple elements in a coherent and effective manner, and without such ability, the success of military operations can be seriously compromised.

The achievement of specific aspects related to the effective organization of cooperation and the rigorous application of operational requirements in the course of a military operation, in the temporal, spatial and tactical dimensions, is a fundamental responsibility of the commander and the staff of the respective echelon. Managing these issues is essential to ensure strategic and tactical success in combat through effective integration of available resources and forces.

The experience gained in recent conflicts, including the war in Ukraine, has shown that one of the main tasks of the command is to concentrate efforts and coordinate actions between the various land, air and anti-aircraft units. This coordination aims to achieve common goals, such as the decisive neutralization of the enemy and the continuity of military operations. The success of an operation depends on the ability of the forces to maintain constant pressure on the enemy, through a series of coordinated actions, which destabilize the reaction capacity of the opponent (<https://re-russia.net/review/279/>, 2023).

In this context, the organization of cooperation becomes a very important component, derived from the central importance of the purpose of the operation. It involves careful analysis of the actions and means available at the upper echelons, as well as accurate anticipation of the movements of the enemy. In order to ensure operational success, it is essential to highlight the clear sequence of activities carried out by the commander and the staff for the effective coordination of the resources and forces involved.

We note that the system of cooperation, having a centralized character, gives the commander a primordial role in the management and coordination of all actions, and the final responsibility for the success of the operation lies, thus, with the commander, who must ensure that all resources are allocated and optimally managed to maximize the strategic effect and to successfully carry out the mission. This centralization of coordination not only simplifies the decision chain, but also ensures a clear continuity in the implementation of operational plans, being essential for coherence and efficiency in the conduct of modern military operations.

Thus, the initial data for the organization of the cooperation are: the mission received and the specific conditions for its execution; the provisions of the upper echelon on the organization of cooperation. Therefore, the decision of the commander constitutes the basis for the organization of cooperation.

We emphasize that, depending on the situation created and the form of action, the work of the commander on the organization of cooperation, having a mutual connection, can be divided into *three stages*:

- *the first* is determined on the basis of the appropriation of the primary mission and the analysis of the situation: the commander decides it and determines the main problems of cooperation;
- *the second* is setting the missions on the alignments, time and variants, the procedures for their execution and the directions of action; instructions on cooperation are given;
- *the third* is the direct activity of the commander and the staff in organizing cooperation, which is specified in the field or on a map.

From the experience gained, it follows that the organization of cooperation within military operations involves an essential activity, aimed at dividing combat actions into distinct moments and structuring detailed operational scenarios. These scenarios must take into account the dynamics of actions of both own and opponent troops. Therefore, the effective coordination between different phases of the operation becomes crucial to ensure a rapid and adaptive responsiveness, depending on the evolution of the situation on the battlefield.

Specifically, the main challenges in organising defence cooperation include: identifying and clearly defining actions and activities that take place over the entire depth of the combat device; managing the reaction time for the enemy passing over defensive alignments; efficiently organizing the fire system and defensive dams on the offensive directions of the enemy. Defence-switching variants should also be considered, depending on different missions and tactical scenarios, in order to maximize resilience and response capacity.

The organization of cooperation, based on possible variants of action of the enemy, involves the establishment of flexible combat modalities and procedures, adapted to the operational context. It is also essential to implement a single signal system that facilitates the concentration of efforts at critical moments, ensuring optimal synchronization between the forces engaged and the successful fulfilment of the mission received.

Within this framework, a key aspect of cooperation is the ability to compensate for the inadequacies of one branch by using other branches, thereby ensuring tactical complementarity. Precisely predicting the evolution of the tactical situation and avoiding failure in combat are integrated into the complexity of the problems that the commander and the staff must solve. These challenges require not only a good understanding of the operational context, but also an impeccable execution of strategic plans, based on rigorous and flexible coordination of all available forces.

Within the offensive, cooperation issues are determined on the basis of assigned missions, alignments and key moments, being detailed according to the depth of the immediate mission. This process includes planning to move to the *offensive from the movement*, establishing the succession and the time required to cross the initial alignments, the effective deployment of the offensive action and the optimal time to trigger it. At the same time, the specific missions and the time necessary to carry them out, as well as the time of preparation of the forces for launching the offensive, are precisely determined.

In the event of a transition to the *offensive of direct contact with the enemy*, the additional indication shall be both the time and the order of regrouping or replacing the units involved, and, to ensure continuity of actions and avoid losses caused by lack of synchronization. This careful organization allows to maintain a constant pace of operations and quickly adapt to the changes in the battlefield.

The methods of organizing cooperation under the current conditions are varied and flexible, being determined mainly by the specificity of the operational situation, the level of training of the forces and the experience of the commanders involved. Contextual factors such as technological evolution, enemy nature and geographic

conditions influence the way cooperation is planned and implemented, requiring an adaptive and innovative approach to ensure the success of offensive actions (Watling, Reynolds).

CONCLUSIONS

Of the many challenges of military art, organizing and maintaining cooperation for the annihilation of the enemy occupy a central place, being a field that requires creative and innovative solutions, not only from a theoretical perspective, but also from a practical one. Cooperation is both a matter of technical coordination and a dynamic process, involving adaptability and continuous adjustments depending on the evolution of the situation on the ground. Maintaining cooperation during military actions is a critical mission for the commander, whereas the inherent changes during operations frequently require the modification of the original plan in order to remain effective and relevant in the face of an unpredictable enemy.

In order to ensure the continuity of cooperation during the conduct of military actions, the commander must constantly monitor whether the actions of subordinated units are in line with the original plan and whether they remain synchronised with the strategic objectives set. This active oversight is essential to prevent uncontrolled deviations from the operational plan, which may jeopardise the overall success of the mission. In a modern struggle, where dynamism and unpredictability are the order of the day, the ability to maintain the coherence of subordinate actions becomes a test of the quality of military leadership.

More than ever, in the current context of increasingly complex and interconnected conflicts, the organization and maintenance of cooperation between all forces and means involved in a military operation is a critical node in the chain of missions of the commander and the staff. Whether land, air, naval forces or logistical support elements, the success of an operation depends crucially on the synergy between these elements, which underlines the importance of crack-free coordination. The essential role of the commander is to coordinate these elements efficiently, in order to transform the operational potential into a concrete success on the battlefield. As the above-presented aspects show, the system of cooperation has evolved considerably throughout the history of military art, reflecting major changes in technology and tactics of war. Much of the knowledge gained on the application of this concept remains relevant today, providing valuable lessons that guide the planning and execution of contemporary operations. On the other hand, as military technology and the operational environment continue to evolve, the cooperation system must also adapt to meet new challenges.

Therefore, the experience of the past should be seen not only as a solid historical basis, but also as an essential guide to the future development of military strategies and tactics. It indicates the necessary directions of improvement to meet the modern challenges of war and maximize the efficiency of armed actions.

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