

ON THE MATURITY OF OPERATIONAL ART IN ROMANIAN MILITARY THINKING

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Going through the scientific military analyses of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian and Middle Eastern wars, one can see their reference to a ubiquitous paradigm – the operational art. Within this approach, the authors intend to capture the philosophy of the concept of “operational art” through doctrinal introspection and the influence of the international schools on Romanian military thinking. It highlights the importance of operational art as a planning tool for a modern thinking school. The authors have traced the premises of the emergence, development, use, and doctrinal adaptation of the main characteristics of the concept related to the development of military art. This is also the purpose of this article, on the one hand, to promote and campaign for a deeper understanding of the concept, and on the other hand, to find a solution for the cognitive institutionalization of operational art (for example, a scientific centre). Thus, this paperwork does not aim for an exhaustive approach to the operational art but aims at briefly presenting the general progress of the operational art, as well as the evolution throughout Romanian military history. Interspersed with examples of how to apply it and of the effects it produces, the approach may arouse interest in paying more practical and theoretical attention to this important concept.

Keywords: military science; operational art – theory and practice; great tactics; minor tactics; operational art department;

INTRODUCTION

Operational art is a fairly well-known concept in Romanian military academics. On the one hand, it is an old legacy from Romania’s modern military history. On the other hand, it represents a creative tool for approaching modern warfare, today being part of the Euro-Atlantic philosophy regarding the decision-making and implementing the process in military actions.

The advantage lies in the fact that, internationally, there is sufficient bibliography and, at the same time, the concept of operational art is approached thoroughly and scientifically in the university environment and the relevant conferences. Likewise, the military organizations, headquarters, and the decision-making process respect the requirements, principles, and methods specific to the operational art.

Although both the format of military planning manuals and doctrines promote elements of operational art, the authors believe that it is quite likely for this concept not to be fully understood by all participants involved in planning, executing, and evaluating military actions. Without speculating, in the best of circumstances, there are differences in understanding between officers of different services or specialties, ranks, and, of course, personnel in the multinational military environment. Having a large art component, the art of applying theoretical principles through the creativity of military commanders and planners, there is the premise that the way of understanding and applying the principles of the concept is different from one generation to another, from one school of thinking to another, from practitioner to theoretician, from planner to executor and so on.

Because this work is theoretical, historical examples are used for authentic arguments in the analysis of the concept of “operational art”.

In this context, the present paperwork is intended to bring back to attention the importance of operational art, this indispensable link between strategy and tactics. In addition, it is aimed at promoting it in the hope that the personnel directly and indirectly involved in the planning and execution of military actions will deepen and assimilate more knowledge about this very abstract concept, reducing the reluctance of some commanders and staff to apply a process that has proven its value in many operations, including in Ukraine.

Through this approach an introspection within the philosophy of operational art is proposed to be carried out by capturing the need for the emergence, development,

use, and doctrinal adaptation of its main characteristics and principles. To this end, the action aspects that foreshadowed the emergence, definition, and conceptual development of the doctrinal content of military art and the operational art's foundation will be considered.

The first objective of this paperwork is to present the main historical sources that sensed, predicted, generated, and developed operational art elements, which later defined the philosophy of modern operational art concepts. In addition, certain characteristics specific to operational art that have been applied in some military actions will be briefly presented. In this context, it will be possible to present the first national efforts to promote and develop operational art, by identifying the main Romanian authors who have supported the development of military art, in general, and of operational art, in particular.

Another goal is an enthusiastic attempt to promote a deep understanding of the operational art, the use of appropriate language, not only theoretically, according to manuals or doctrines, but also practically, as creative as possible in exercises.

The result of the research should support the understanding of this planning tool by all specialists, and the promotion of modern operational art at the military decision-makers level. Therefore, it could support the acceptance and development of knowledge in the field, based on the arguments presented in this article, and especially the conviction that a structure for research and exploitation of operational art is needed in the military system.

The authors' vision consists in the constructive application of critical thinking, the avoidance of harmful biases in the decision-making process on scientific foundations, and the argumentation that supports the promotion of the operational art in higher military educational institutions, at the level of field and operational command. Thus, operational art will be able to occupy its well-deserved place in the Romanian military thinking and will complete the spectrum of operational planning tools in the field of military art and science.

OPERATIONAL ART – FROM THE CONCEPT EMERGENCE TO ITS DEVELOPMENT IN INTERNATIONAL MILITARY THINKING

This chapter will present some historical sources on the emergence, place, role, and development of operational art, highlighting the fact that this component of military art adjoins strategy and tactics as the main tool for planning military actions at the operational level.

The authors point out and insist on differentiating the concepts “operational art” and “operational level”. Thus, they mention that operational art is not a tool

strictly dedicated to joint commands, while some confuse the joint level with the operational level. In the context of the above, operational art can be used, as appropriate to the situation, at both tactical and strategic level as well.

In order to comprehend the role and place of operational art in military thinking, the symbiotic relationships between the main concepts specific to military science will be presented. Thus, *military science* is a sphere of human activity whose function is to acquire and systematize the knowledge concerning the laws and principles of warfare, the rules and forms of organization, training and use of armed forces, the methods and procedures of military operations (*Probleme fundamentale ale științei militare*/Fundamental Problems of Military Science, 2004, p. 7).

Military art represents a specialized field of military science regarding the organization and management of armed combat and includes not only the principles, methods, procedures, tactics and rules of preparing and conducting military actions, but also the abilities of commanders and troops to achieve success in military actions. Military art is defined by its structure: the *theory of military art* (the technology of armed combat) and the *armed combat* (the conduct of military actions).

Operational art is a component of military art and represents the art of skilfully applying the principles of armed combat according to the acquired knowledge and experience of the commander, adapted to the conditions of military actions and other variables in the field.

It is obviously difficult to accurately define operational art. For example, in the American literature, the definition of the concept has been comprehensively surmised by Milan Vego, who emphasized that operational art is “a component of military art concerned with the theory and practice of planning, preparing, conducting, and sustaining campaigns and major operations aimed at accomplish strategic or operational objectives in a given theatre” (Vego, 2009, p. 1-4.). The model envisioned by Vego is based on the *means-ways-ends* triptych.

It should be mentioned that even the words used throughout time have been different. For instance, the formulas of the time, used in the military art to define its levels, were: *Great Tactics* (*grand tactics*) and *Minor Tactics*.

❖ *Grand Tactics* or *General Tactics* – a concept that today represents a part of both *Strategy* and *Operational Art* (a formula used today for the campaign planning process – strategic level); in *Grand Tactics*, the problems concerning the coordination of the actions of the participating forces were solved through a rigorous evaluation of two essential factors: time and movement (today's manoeuvre). This problem

is very effectively addressed in today's military actions through operational design, chronization matrix and other planning documents (targeting, logistics).

❖ *Minor Tactics or Elementary Tactics* – the concept that today represents *tactics* (the related formula, used for the process of planning battles or clashes, representing the *tactical level*).

Following Napoleon's model of how to approach battles, it could be seen as a direction of development of a planning level different from the strategic level (General tactics). Napoleon envisioned an intermediate level of command and control of tactical forces in order to achieve his strategic goals (he foresaw the operational level as we know it today). One can see in his actions that the specific principles of tactical level planning (forces and means, means-ways-ends) were in place: the ends were established, the means were established (even if they were tactical level ones), but the ways were not well founded. The creative genius of the general identified a way for tactical forces to be engaged in large-scale military actions, by respecting principles of armed combat such as mobility, flexibility, surprise, coordination, concentration of effort, as well as elements of operational design such as centre of gravity (COG), line of operations (LO), vulnerabilities, decisive conditions (DC), decisive points (DP) etc. Even if not all of them were explicitly named, they are found in the great Napoleon's conceptions.

Napoleon's concept of using multiple corps required him to consider many of the principles of operational-level planning from the perspective of a strategic thinker. Forces were placed under a local command, assigned to a general on the ground (foreshadowing the development of the *mission command* concept). The missions of the corps were directed towards the same objective in order to achieve the end state set by Napoleon himself.

For planning, he foresaw and used coordination, synchronization, manoeuvre and logistical support. They, at the scale of military actions conducted by multiple forces, diverse in terms of equipment and specialization, prove the need to define an intermediate level of the application of military art, which would link the strategic level of the generals and the tactical level of the executive commanders. This level is represented by the operational level of military art, whereas the way of applying the principles of military art defines the concept of operational art as it is known today.

Such an approach, in terms of implementing the principles of military art at the operational level, is proof that the command and control of large, corps-level tactical units acting individually in different areas required the development

of operational-level thinking, which converges and demonstrates the emergence and need for the development of modern operational art.

Another important step in the emergence and recognition of the place of the operational level in the military art was determined by the development of the railroad (Tylecote, 1992) and, with it, the advent of the telegraph (Gray, 1892, pp. 639-659). The railroads exponentially increased the mobility of troops (Crump, 2007). The telegraph facilitated the transmission of orders and instructions in a very short time to any command at appreciable distances.

A further important moment in the development of operational art was marked by the First Industrial Revolution (18th-19th century). Mass production generated an adaptation of the war industry to the new innovations, so that weapon factories adopted the technologies, adapted to the need for supply in the flow of materials and armaments, shaped the logistic support lines by positioning themselves as close as possible to the areas of operations (Lynn, 1993, pp. 9-30), but sheltered from enemy actions, all of which influenced the way of perceiving and understanding how to wage war according to principles adapted to these realities, thus pertaining to operational thinking, the precursor of operational art specific principles.

An important turning point in the development of the operational art was the emergence of thinking schools generated by the establishment of staff and planning teams based mainly on battlefield experience, as well as on the vision of military strategists to implement their command-and-control vision according to the forces available, the expected effect and the enemy reaction.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the military personalities who significantly contributed to the emergence and evolution of modern operational art.

Gerhard von Scharnhorst (1755-1813) was tasked with reorganizing the Prussian army and establishing the Prussian General Staff. He also developed a comprehensive reform programme, centred on replacing the long-standing professional army (mercenaries) with a standing army based on universal service (conscripts).

Helmuth von Moltke (1800-1891), Chief of the Prussian General Staff (1857-1888), carried out major reforms in the doctrinal, structural and action-oriented approach to military art. The results of these reforms led to: the emergence of mass armies; the constant expansion of the battlefield; the emergence of the theatre of operations; the narrowing of the scope of military strategy; new methods of employing combat forces; war games at the tactical and strategic levels, as well as the execution of large-scale exercises and manoeuvres, measures that produced visible effects in the evolution of military art (Roth, pp. 7-8).

Antoine-Henry de Jomini (1779-1869) is the leading representative of the French school of thinking. Jomini's major contribution to the art of war was the application of the principles of armed combat. In his conception, the fundamental principles defining warfare concerned the manoeuvre of forces and means, the main effort, the concentration of effort, decisive points, centres of gravity, and lines of communication (de Jomini, 2012).

Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) uses the term *war plan* synonymously with a *military strategy* to refer to a mechanism that links the government to the commander and his forces (<https://www.militarystrategymagazine.com/article/strategy-war-and-the-relevance-of-carl-von-clausewitz/>). In his view, a war plan defines the objective of the use of military force and determines the appropriate means to achieve it. In Clausewitz's understanding, the term *war* describes a state that is initially characterized by a duel, whereas at the level of combat, it describes the interactive process of imposing one's will on the opponent, who in turn wishes to do the same. The basic ideas of warfare conveyed in his work are the use of appropriate means, the concordance between aim, objectives and means, probability, chance, the genius of the commander and the military virtues of the army (Ib.)

Clausewitz proposes several steps for the study of the factors (and their properties) that significantly impact the character and direction of war, such as: assessment of the strategic situation and identification of ways to carry out the political will; definition of goals, final objectives and courses of action; estimates of probabilities and opportunities in a war, discussion of courses of action and suitable contingencies; summarizing the results of a war plan (Ib.) As a result of the above, Clausewitz's work can be said to be a prerequisite for the revival of strategic thinking and action through the use of principles of operational art – this is an example of the use of operational art at the strategic level.

Summarizing, *Grand Tactics* involved how troops would be engaged and deployed, *Minor Tactics* included the integration of infantry, artillery and cavalry for a combined attack, and engineering focused on attacking and defending fortifications.

The emergence of the *operational level* and *operational art* concepts came after the mentioned approaches, as a result of the acknowledgement of the separation of the strategic level into two components of military art – the *strategic level (political-military level)* and the *operational level (military level of planning and leadership)*.

Mikhail Tukhachevsky (1893-1937) is one of the first military specialists who mentioned the particular component elements of operational art, but without really

identifying the concept; it was an intuitive act generated by direct observation of the evolution of the physiognomy of war (<https://cersipamantromanesc.wordpress.com/tag/batalia-varsoviei/>). “Owing to the fact that it is impossible, with such extensive fronts in the modern age, to destroy the enemy in a single blow, we are obliged to do so gradually, through operations that cost the enemy more than ourselves. In short, a series of destructive operations must be carried out based on logical principles and successively planned with precise objectives in pursuit of the enemy's destruction. This mode of action can take the place of decisive battle, which was the form of engagement of armies in the past that fought on small-sized fronts”. (Tukhachevsky). It is obvious that Tukhachevsky later influenced the military art, being the one who suggested the existence of the operational level of planning and command.

Alexandr. A. Svechin (1878-1938) embodied Tukhachevsky's thinking and materialized the concept of *operational art (operativnoye iskusstvo)*, (Nistor 2017, p. 69, apud Durham, 1998, p. 3), by developing the concepts of *action/deep battle (glubokiy boy)* and *deep operation (glubokaya operatsiya)* (Glantz, 1989, pp. 31-43). Later, the USSR developed these concepts, transformed and refined in the Soviet combat regulations, which were achieved by actions of penetrating the front, encircling the strongest enemy group (today, referred to as the centre of gravity/COG) and annihilating it.

The concept prefigured, since its inception, the joint approach to warfare, the theory and practice of preparing and executing land, sea and air military actions. Operational art deals with the planning and execution of joint and independent operations (combat actions) at the strategic-operational, operational, and operational-tactical levels (Kozlov, 1971).

The application of these principles can be seen in the modern military actions, which followed the emergence and development of the concept and which validated the importance of operational art and the adaptation of the principles of military art to the new conditions of warfare. We exemplify some of these events with recommendations for further study, such as Gallipoli (Battle of Gallipoli, 19 February 1915-9 January 1916); Battle of Jutland (31 May 1916-1 June 1916); Operation Weserubung (April-June 1940) and the list can go on.

Finally, the role and purpose of each of the means used at each level of warfare could be mentioned. Thus, *strategy* determined *how, why, with whom, when* and *where* to use military force in military operations. *Operations* level dealt with the implementation of strategic directions in relation to the forces at the disposal

to produce effects at the strategic level. *Tactics* dealt with the execution of tasks to achieve operational objectives, whereas *logistics* had the role of providing troops at the front. Therefore, all the functions of logistics are included here.

THE OPERATIONAL ART IN ROMANIAN MILITARY THINKING

The first elements of *great tactics* (the name of the time for what we recognize today as operational art) are said to be found in the young Prussian officer, Carol I, the first King of Romania (1839, Sigmaringen – 1914, Sinaia). Although the king did not benefit from von Moltke's great reforms, the Prussian military school and the experience of the Second German-Danish War of 1864 supported the construction of the new Romanian army and influenced the tactics of the Independence War. The king's participation in the assault on the citadels of Fredericia and Dybbøl in Denmark in 1864 seems to have inspired him at Plevna, applying very cautious and intelligent tactics (<https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/razboiul-de-independenta-al-romaniei-in-scrisorile-637676.html>), a moment in which, without the participation of the Romanian Army, the Russians would have been defeated.

Today, it can be said that the most representative theorist and practitioner of the time regarding the *grand tactics* was Marshal Alexandru Averescu (3 April 1859, Babele, United Principalities – 2 October 1938, Bucharest, Romania). Having studied in Italy, he wrote three valuable tactical volumes. Although accused of translating and taking over some texts from foreign works (Otu, 2019, p. 18), the volumes became the bibliography of the Superior War School, of which Averescu became the commander, between 1864 and 1896. The tactics introduced in the military education by Averescu will define the fighting style of the Romanian Army in the First World War. We recall some combat actions defined by the *Great Tactics*: the Rusciuc attack of the Romanian Navy, the Flămânda Manoeuvre (exceptional action planning) (Scipanov, 2018, pp. 56-65), the Mărăști offensive (the fastest offensive pace in the war) and the list can go on.

A brilliant application of Grand Tactics was achieved in the Romanian-Hungarian war, where General Gheorghe D. Mărdărescu¹ (4 August 1866, Iași, Romania – 5 September 1938, Bad Nauheim, Germany), former commander of the Superior War School, defeated the Hungarian Bolshevik army, occupying Budapest. The battle of 24 and 25 July 1919 (Tisa/Szolnok) is one of the most brilliant victories of the Romanian Army in the Hungarian Campaign after the First World War (<https://mvu.ro/razboiul-de-dupa-marele-razboi-campania-din-ungaria-din-1919/>

¹ General of the Romanian Army/General of Hungary (1919-1920), A.N.

and <https://www.aktual24.ro/batalia-de-pe-tisa-si-ocuparea-budapestei-victoria-asupra-ungariei-care-a-facut-romania-mare-singurul-razboi-castigat-de-romani-singuri-fara-ajutorul-altor-aliati/>). Gheorghe D. Mărdărescu mentioned: “*When the Hungarian Bolshevik army had crossed the Tisa..., in its blind arrogance it believed that the road to Transylvania had been opened. Confident in your tried valour, I directed you to attack the enemy's army in flank and rear. That is what happened! You flawlessly executed my orders, overcoming with manliness and bravery all obstacles that stood in your way. Through your bravery, soldiers of the manoeuvre group, you greatly contributed to the opening of the road to Budapest!*” (Furduiu, <https://horthymiklos.wordpress.com/gheorghe-d-mardarescu/>).

In Chapter II of the book *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present* (Olsen, van Creveld, 2010), the authors capture the spectacular evolution of German operational art: “*The Recovery: From Sitz to Blitz*” (as it is known, the blitzkrieg was at that time the most effective form of application of the operational art) (Showalter, pp. 35-63). Since Romania was an ally, we rather participated in losing the blitzkrieg in the USSR instead of learning to apply modern tactics. But the implementation of the writings of Frunze², Tukhachevsky, and Svechin, officers of the new Soviet school of operational art, made Operation Uranus (Battles of the Don Elbow/Stalingrad), led by Marshal Zhukov³, turn the tide of the Second World War.

During the Communist period, we benefited from the Soviet teachings on operational art, with the desire to attack at the decisive moment and time, where the enemy least expects it and at his critical points. In this context, the impact of operational art on the Romanian military school was not surprising, those theories were applied in the Romanian Armed Forces, but under a specific language and a different philosophy.

After joining NATO, the Romanian Armed Forces naturally adopted the allied concepts, through a process that was not always easy or carried out easily, even NATO going through a process of strategic and operational redefinition. For example, the American school of thinking in 1961 was not a follower of this concept – “*...the purpose of this innovation (operational art) is unclear... in Western military science, operational art, as a theoretical concept, is completely rejected... The West must not add this concept to the harmony of military thinking*” (General Walter Jacobs, commander in the U.S. Army, 1961).

² Mikhail Vasilievich Frunze (1885, Pišpek, Russian Empire – 1925, Moscow, Russian S.F.S., USSR) was a Bolshevik leader during the Russian Revolution of 1917, A.N.

³ Gheorghii Konstantinovich Zhukov (1896, Russian Empire – 1974, Moscow, Russian S.F.S., USSR) was a Soviet military and politician, A.N.

It was not until 1982, that the U.S. Army revived the German term of *operation*, and in 1986 the term of *operational art* was adopted by the Russians (FM 100-5). A decade later, in the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps doctrines since 1994, the term *operation* reappeared and the *operational level* and *operational art* were adopted.

The term “*manoeuvre approach*” is a form of manifestation of the British operational art. For example, the U.S. Marine Corps defined operational art as: “*the destruction of enemy cohesion through a variety of rapid, concentrated, and surprising methods*” (Vego, 2009, p. 1-5). The examples can continue with forms of manifestation, such as Network Centric Operation, Effect Based Operation, NATO Effect Based Thinking etc., the operational art being, thus, a framework for the manifestation of military genius, supported by benchmarks, principles, procedures, and processes, models and lessons learned acquired over decades.

Allied doctrine states that operational art is essential in the process of planning the operation through the ability, imagination, creativity, and intuition to plan and carry out the deployment and use of forces, joint capabilities, and other means, in a series of military actions conducted in time and space, for the fulfilment of objectives and the achievement of the desired final state (COPD, Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive, NATO).

The national doctrine adopts the philosophy of the allied concept and emphasizes in the same way: “*Operational art consists in skilfully employing the military instrument to achieve strategic and operative objectives, through the design, organization, integration, and management of campaigns, operations*” (Doctrina Armatei României, 2012, p. 76); “*The operational art is based on the ability of a commander to solve complex and unstructured problems and to create a logical and clear framework, in some cases intuitive, which facilitates the process of planning and transmission of orders*”. (Ib., p. 77).

Regarding the adaptation of the concept to the military actions of the Navy, it was included in the doctrinal approaches of the Romanian Navy: “*The content of maritime operational art includes the theory of preparing and conducting maritime operations and activities to ensure the area of action of the navy*”. (Curs de artă militară, 1998). A more up-to-date approach: “*Operational art consists in skilfully employing the military instrument in time and space, within a campaign/operation, to transpose the received strategic/operational objectives into actions executed at a tactical level, to achieve the final state.*”; “*Operational art can be described as the creative application of the imagination of commanders, supported by own and the staff skills, knowledge and experience, to plan campaigns, major operations,*

and battles.” (FN-2, 2018, p. III-30). “*One of the main purposes of the Operational Art is to plan the battle in the most favourable terms possible so that the enemy can be put at a disadvantage. A brilliant tactic can rarely replace an inadequate operational art*”. (Vego, p. 1-11). In light of what has been presented, it can be summarized that the Romanian thinking school adopted the concept. Thus, creatively applying operational art is the key to comprehensive and effective planning to achieve victory in military action in the shortest possible time and with minimal losses.

From the point of view of the use of operational art, many such examples can be found in the analyses of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and a few can be mentioned that the authors recommend for reading.

For example, retired General Ben Hodges, former commander of the United States Army Europe, analyses the miracle of the counteroffensive in Kharkiv Oblast through the lens of operational art: “*... because of the combination of things I talked about – the deception, the discipline, the preparation. What we have seen so far is operational art*”. (<https://kyivindependent.com/retired-us-general-if-russia-used-nuclear-weapon-in-ukraine-us-would-have-to-get-directly-involved/>).

In *Wavell Room* magazine, Chris Hughes, in the article *Operational Art Reborn*, analyses Russia’s action from the point of view of operational art: “*Russia’s consistent failure to practice the barest outlines of operational art during the planning and execution of their <Special Military Operation> must rank among the foremost explanations. Poor campaign planning, a failure to consider contingencies, and an inability to logically sequence and focus actions supporting a clear strategic main effort saw it squander any opportunity it may have had to impose a fait accompli in Ukraine*” (<https://wavellroom.com/2024/01/12/operational-art-reborn-part-one/>; <https://wavellroom.com/2024/01/12/operational-art-reborn-part-two/>).

Along the same line, at the West Point⁴ Academy, works such as *Back to the Future: Rediscovering Operational Art in an Era of Great Power Competition* can be identified, in which pertinent analyses of war through the lens of operational art can be found (<https://mwi.westpoint.edu/back-to-the-future-rediscovering-operational-art-in-an-era-of-great-power-competition/>).

The Japanese school itself, through Yasuhiro Kawakami⁵, addresses the Russian-Ukrainian war in the article “*Dissecting Russia’s Operational Art in Ukraine. How Disjointed Ends, Ways, and Means Have Shackled Moscow’s Operational Warfare*”

⁴ United States Military Academy West Point.

⁵ Security expert specialized in military strategy, operational mobility, tactics, national defence studies and Japanese security policy, A.N.

(https://www.spf.org/iina/en/articles/kawakami_02.html) and examples can continue by simply searching the internet.

In Romanian military thinking, the specialized study stands out: “*Convențional și hibrid în primul an al războiului Federației Ruse împotriva Ucrainei, concluzii și lecții desprinse din război*” (Ioniță, 2023), in which there are also some lessons identified at the operational level, a study that the authors recommend to be continued.

In the authors’ opinion, Ukraine’s undoubtedly use of the operational art in war was the key to the resilience of this country in the face of the Russian aggressor. The informational preparation for combat was correct and anticipatory (Joint Preparation of the Operational Environment/JPOE/done correctly – element of OA) and the Centre of Gravity (COG – the essence of OA) was correctly identified and protected during the first stages of the invasion (Force Protection – effectively carried out, element of OA), the Russian mechanized troops were lured into urban areas (deception – element of OA), mobile detachments, combined for ambushes were used (mission command – element of OA), and the Russian logistics lines were attacked (indirect approach – element of OA). When the culmination of the Russian special operation ceased, recognized from the moment when the aggressor forces did not fulfil their objectives (determination of the culmination – element of OA), the Ukrainian forces successfully began the counteroffensive on converging directions (coordination, synchronization, synergy – principles of OA). The authors opine that during the continuation of the offensive, Ukrainian forces had to apply the principle of surprise continuously. Ben Hodges suggested an indirect approach by building a bridgehead in Crimea (<https://www.dw.com/ro/ucraina-ar-putea-elibera-crimeea-p%C3%A2n%C4%83-la-sf%C3%A2r%C8%99itul-verii-afirm%C4%83-generalul-american-%C3%AEn-retragere-ben-hodges/a-65279616>).

The question that arises is *Where did the Ukrainian military leaders learn the operational art?* The answer is that they had learned it before, as the Russian heritage was capitalized upon in a Department within the National Defence University of Ukraine in Kyiv. Later, benefiting from the opening to the West, the classical Russian operational art was enriched with the Western one, contributing, it seems decisively, to the success of the Ukrainian forces. Another example is operational logistics, which is also a pillar of the OA. That is why the Ukrainians can request exactly what equipment and ammunition they need and when they actually need it.

CONCLUSIONS

This article attempts to promote this tool for planning and executing military actions – the operational art –, without an exhaustive review of the theory and practice of military art, but rather through specific examples that have marked the emergence and evolution of the concept. The authors envisage that each officer, as his or her career evolution progresses, should have a thorough knowledge of the fundamentals of operational art and apply it creatively, according to their character qualities, national particularities, traditions and ingenuity.

Operational art is a valuable tool for the commander and his staff to find ways to deal with the uncertainty and ambiguity of the increasingly complex, volatile and unpredictable theatre of operations.

Although it does not have a clear definition, which is an advantage, making it flexible, OA is rather a cognitive framework in which the genius of military thinking can manifest itself, which is why there are so many practical examples under the umbrella of a single concept. Thus, the role of operational art, as a tool for planning military action, does not provide one with infallible solutions, being a framework for critical and creative thinking that, under the springs of directional cues and lessons learned, helps inter-arms, inter-force, inter-governmental and multinational creativity.

Operational art is the only planning tool that combines tactical actions into a broader design to help achieve strategic objectives. The authors emphasize that tactical actions, even if successful, cannot lead to victory if they are not integrated into an operational concept.

One of the conclusions resulting from the place and role of operational art in the Romanian military thinking supports and justifies the importance of studying operational art in military institutions, especially in “*Carol I*” National Defence University, within master’s programmes and postgraduate courses, together with elements of military art, in order to achieve the necessary connections to develop critical thinking in relation to their principles, thus promoting the ubiquity of operational art.

The final conclusion, from the authors’ experience, is that although there is a relevant doctrinal maturity, the Romanian operational art is not at a stage of full maturity, which in fact represents its continuous development and transformation. Therefore, the recommendation is to consider the possibility of the existence of a research centre, department or interdepartmental centre of excellence,

headquartered in a military educational institution that would deal strictly with the issue of operational art, following the model existing in Ukraine and the main allied states.

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