

JOINT FORCE AND CONTEMPORARY MILITARY ACTIONS

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In the current changing international context, the worldwide power balance along with its inter-dependencies shows that mankind is facing problems and pressures posed by resources limitation (the oil ones being the most relevant), dramatic climate evolution and a decisive impact of technologies. The approach of the armed forces to the national defense related interests, as well as to the asymmetrical and irregular threats underlines the joint force's capacity to be the most powerful and adequate tool to address all of these.

Key words: *joint force, future military actions, irregular warfare, counter-insurgency, non-state actors, cyber space.*

1. THE NATURE OF WAR

The fundamental nature of war has not changed too much over history and it will not change in the foreseeable future. War is a political act and its political dimension will continue to be a characteristic of the 21st century, even though currently it is predominantly a consequence of non-state or transnational groups' actions.

Besides the political dimension of contemporary conflicts, human nature will also play a significant role, as wars are all social phenomena. People react in many different ways when facing unexpected experiences. Therefore, they are supposed to be disoriented, ignoring the essential aspects of these events. Moreover the human tendency is to consider the simple hypothesis as actual facts, failing to admit that the opponent is able to learn as well. As history recorded many times, when different cultures clash the adversaries will react in unpredictable manners. *"Know your enemy and know yourself; in one hundred battles you will not be endangered".*[1].

The solution to tackle such type of contemporary conflicts at international level is to resort to a joint force. The latter is the operational or strategic entity composed of units and structures belonging to different armed forces categories, acting jointly under a unitary command in order to accomplish a mutual goal.

2. FUTURE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR JOINT FORCE

The ability to fight and win battles has always been the basic mission of the joint force. Moreover, within the circumstances already described, the joint force's basic mission will also encompass the ability to deter conflicts. For this, the joint force will have to maintain a deterring posture and the capacity to operate in order to prevent and win wars. Thus, future joint force's missions will include: national defense, deterrence of the potential enemies and fighting and winning wars, when necessary.

Since for the future the use of armed forces will be a political

matter, the commanders along with their staffs will have to understand the strategic and political objectives of the military actions environment, first of all. Current predictions show that for the next twenty years the joint force will be involved in conventional or irregular conflicts.

For the joint force planners a tremendous importance is given by the scenarios in which the force will be involved. Presently it is commonly admitted that the threat of a major war between two or more worldwide powers or Alliances is negligible. Nevertheless, history lessons are still relevant in this respect; therefore a logical conclusion might be that of maintaining credible military capabilities as the sole approach to deter a conflict. The Roman dictum *“If you want peace prepare for war”* is still valid as this approach ensured Rome’s survivability as the major military power for over a thousand years. Nonetheless, Mike Mullen recently said: *“If you prepare for war you’d better do it properly”* [2]. Thus, to some extent the long-term joint force approach toward conflicts should be war deterrence. However, if the respective deterrence does not show its results, the armed force efficacy on the battle field will be crucial.

On the other hand, the present Middle East war poses a real challenge to joint force, namely the irregular warfare. Within an irregular warfare the joint force’s opponents have proved a massive capacity to adapt and learn, even better than the conventional forces, both on the battle field and on the political scene. Therefore, the joint force must have a spectacular adaptability capacity. For this, joint force planners have to take into account two great limitations:

logistic support and projection capacity. From the joint force perspective, the logistic support refers to issues related to long distances forces movement, oil and lubricants delivery and the like. The failure to provide a joint force with all of the above mentioned items means a disaster in terms of military actions, as a common military American adage says: *“Without logistic we cannot move our forces an inch on the ground”*. [3].

From another perspective, the future war categories will pose particular challenges to a joint force. Thus, the force might expect its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance as well as command-control capabilities to be attacked. In addition, it should be mentioned that joint force opponents in an irregular warfare would not be limited by inherent planning bureaucratic processes, nor by the obligation to obey all rules, international treaties and conventions related to armed forces’ intervention. Moreover, the past irregular conflicts are indicative of the need of the joint force to thoroughly understand its adversaries, namely the cultural, ethnic, politic and religious environment. In an irregular conflict like the one from the Middle East, there are no decisive operations leading to a rapid final conclusion. Instead, a joint force might gain a victory over its opponents only through a sustained prolonged engagement in order to support a unitary and coherent strategic and political approach.

Another aspect of a paramount importance for the joint force is *“the capacity to innovate during peace time and to adapt during the war”* [4]. Moreover, apart from a force’s adaptability and innovation, the joint

force planners must ask the right questions at the right moment. In this respect, one way of finding the answers should consist in resorting to the armed forces' history.

3. FUTURE MILITARY ACTIONS AND JOINT FORCE

An analysis of the military phenomenon evolution from a historical perspective may lead to the conclusion that the dramatic events of the 20th century (the two world wars) are relevant for two reasons: they led to a change in the course of history and they were the result of a clash between ideologies. In this respect, World War Two meant a war against Fascism and Nazism, and hence against ideologies responsible for millions of deaths. Moreover, the Cold War meant a war against communism, while the end of the Cold War recorded a struggle against the African genocide. Meanwhile, counter-insurgency has entered the world in an entire new era, the age of total war [5].

At present, the fast evolving technology pace shows the future war profile. Many irreversible relevant military transformations have been put into practice. These evolutions along with the economic, geopolitical and demographic factors appear to make the nowadays world a more dangerous and less stable place than before.

First of all, the United States Armed Forces lost the monopoly of high precision ammunition and weapons. Currently China is releasing ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as other ammunition types posing a major threat to the American military bases from Pacific. Similarly, Iran acquires technology that allows it

to produce intelligent ammunition. Moreover, the non-state actors pose real threats. For instance, the Hezbollah organization launched against Israel more than 4,000 rockets and shells, leading to the evacuation of more than 300,000 Israeli citizens. As a result, as the guided ammunition proliferation spreads the asymmetric war will massively transform the characteristics of war.

However, the biggest challenge comes from the cyber space. The most exposed targets are the high developed countries with a relevant cyber infrastructure as this structure is quite hard to be efficiently protected and those triggering the attacks to be identified.

In conclusion, while the challenges against global order diversify and increase, the means to counter them have not been fully developed so far. In the present austerity stage, states affected by economic crises allot fewer resources for their own armed forces development. For instance, the world's biggest budget – the Pentagon's – will be cut by over \$400 billions, for the next decade. However, neither the budget allotted to the military structures of the European Union, nor the military budgets of the newly emerging powers like India and Brazil are not yet able to match the budget of the aforementioned superpower in the long run.

Nowadays powers, among them the United States as the most relevant in terms of military capabilities, will try to maintain their dominant posture maintaining a high technology development pace. In this respect, USA have recently recorded significant progresses in the domain of directional energy, such as lasers, robotics, air vehicles. On the other

hand, other states, such as China, manage to keep the pace with the Americans, or even to surpass them in niche domains.

In the future, the devices using artificial intelligence and cutting edge technology, will have to be easier to camouflage in order to decrease the deployed forces' vulnerabilities and make them harder to be attacked by insurgents. One might say that the great powers' technology advance in terms of military capabilities will constantly lose its relevance, against the new threats to the global security. As a result, if these threats will not be efficiently countered by using proper means, such as diplomatic, politic and civil tools, they will tend to break the balance of the international system, with incalculable consequences for the world peace and security.

Based on all of the above details, it results that one of the most relevant aspects for the joint force used in modern military actions is its ability to innovate during peace time and to adapt during war. In peace time the military organizations cannot replicate with accuracy the real combat conditions, especially when the opponents try by all means to destroy the engaged forces. Therefore, the joint force's training must focus on: relevant historical facts studies, tactical, operational and strategic situation analysis based on case studies, the use of war games and simulation exercises, and last but not least the efficient use intelligence

concerning the opponents. Moreover, for the joint force to be used as a tool for conflict resolution, the training sessions and exercises should never end with a conclusion such as: "*All objectives have been fulfilled*". On the contrary, as the historical events have proven, the above mentioned conclusion could only lead to a disaster in real combat. Thus, even though all objectives may be realistic, confrontation in real time will always yield unforeseen and hence unplanned situations for the joint force involved in action.

Another relevant aspect refers to military efficacy, which is often assimilated with a high technological level. Nothing could be so far from the truth. On the contrary, in order to be effective, one does not have to possess the most developed weapons systems or the best equipped soldiers, although these aspects are relevant to some extent. At war, military efficacy means the ability to recognize if the hypotheses formulated before the outbreak of hostilities are still valid or not. In case their validity becomes questionable, their immediate change/dismissal is mandatory.

To conclude, today's lessons may not be so relevant tomorrow, no matter how well recorded and institutionalized they are. The enemy is human and hence will learn and adapt. If military diligently learn and know the war tactics and techniques, the enemy will definitely do the same.

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