

COMMAND AND CONTROL IN MODERN MILITARY OPERATIONS

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“A strong collective defense of our populations, territory and forces is the core purpose of the Alliance and remains our most important security task”.

A memorable sentence from the Final Declaration of the Kohl/Strasbourg Summit, in April 2009, which, beside the fact that reconfirms the colossal importance of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, represents the milestone for the projected NATO’s Strategic Concept for the next 20 years.

INTRODUCTION

Eighteen years ago, in 1991, during the NATO Summit in Rome, the Alliance began to transform itself post-Cold War, in good faith, by adopting a new Strategic Concept. Although at that time NATO had not started any operation yet, in less than a year its aircraft equipped with airborne early warning systems (AWACS) started to patrol the skies over Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the mobile command headquarters of Army Group North, which no longer exists, were to become the UN Protection Force headquarters of the United Nations.

The two steps launched NATO in a series of increasingly varied and demanding operational commitments inside and outside Europe, first in the Balkans and the Mediterranean Sea and then in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Darfur region of Sudan.

These steps also led to the emergence of a model of political and operational cooperation between NATO, UN, OSCE and the EU based on the decision made in December 1992 by the foreign ministers of NATO countries,

according to which the Alliance would be prepared to support the Peacekeeping Operations developed under the authority of the UN Security Council.

COMMAND AND CONTROL – GENERAL NOTIONS

“Command and Control”, in general terms, have been performed in various forms of all human institutions structured more or less hierarchically, as a basic function, referring specifically to organization and management. David Alberts, in the paper called *“Command Arrangements for Peace Operations”*¹, highlighted the separate emergence and development of the command and control concept in the military and industrial management fields, due to their specific nature.

J. William Snyder, Jr., in the study *“Command versus Operational Control”*², mentioned that the term *“command”* is firstly *“an art”*, meaning the commanders’ capacity to state concepts, imagine the final stage of the operation to be carried out, set tasks for the forces, allocate resources, estimate risks and make decisions. During combat, commanders see and understand what is happening, make fast decisions to move forces at the right time and place and anticipate the changes and developments in the evolution of the situation. Commanders lead, direct and motivate subordinates and the organization to carry out the missions. The *“command”* is, therefore, *“the commander’s privilege”*. The *“control”*, on the other hand, is a science of the military forces by which a staff works independently or in cooperation with other staffs, to carry out the commander’s orders. The *“control”* is, thus, *“the staff’s business”*.

Alongside the efforts of formulating a definition that brings together a broad acception, there has been an extension of the term *“Command and Control”*, also known under the abbreviation *“C2”*, toward *“C3”* (+ Communications), *“C4”* (+ Computers), *“C4I2”* (+ Information & Intelligence), *“C4I2SR”* (+ Reconnaissance & Surveillance). Nowadays, by allocating two more “weights” to the concept, the *“C6”* (+ Coordination & Cooperation) result tends to further complicate the meaning of the basic term.

Beyond the conceptual approach, NATO experts, particularly the community strictly dedicated to the *“Command and Control”* study (NC3A), assign a broader understanding to the phrase *“C2”*. Thus, *“Command and*

¹ Alberts, David and Richard E. Hayes, *Command Arrangements for Peace Operations*, Washington, DC, Command and Control Research Program (CCRP) Publication Series, 1985, ch. 1

² Snyder, Wiliam, Jr., *Command versus Operational Control*, Washington National Defense University Press, 2000, p. 54

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Control” are “functions of commanders, staffs, and other command and control bodies in maintaining the combat readiness of their forces, preparing operations and directing troops to perform their tasks”³.

THE POST COLD WAR EVOLUTION OF THE COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURES

The new command structure approved at the NATO Summit in Prague in 2002, characterized by the emphasis on Joint Commands and Task Forces, reflects the lessons learned from the command arrangements for the management of operations in the Balkans, which have evolved over time under the auspices of the Allied Forces Command of South Europe, in Naples, Italy.

IFOR, in 1995, and KFOR in 1999 were based on the capabilities of securing the entry forces into theater of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), which was founded in 1994 as headquarters for both operations. As part of the new force structures, also approved in 2002, the ARRC has become a model for other six land headquarters of High Readiness Forces (HRF). By rotation, the seven multinational corps have been charged to provide the Land Component of NRF.

Some of these forces, alongside with Canada, have provided staffs for the multinational headquarters of HRF and for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. By their double utility in HRF and ISAF these forces acquired skills and experience to conduct both Rapid Reaction and Long Term Operations.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the NATO commitment to Afghanistan opened the door to innovative approaches to the more flexible use of NATO forces in support of non-NATO operations conducted by allied countries or international organizations. When in 2002 Germany and the Netherlands requested NATO support to facilitate the sharing of ISAF command, before it became a NATO-led operation, the expertise and resources promptly offered by NATO have demonstrated that the Alliance wanted and was able to contribute to planning and conducting operations led by others. The operational cooperation between ISAF and the Multinational Forces Command in Afghanistan led by the U.S. and the partnership in the training of Iraqi Security Forces of the NATO Training Mission and the Multinational Command for Transition Security led by the U.S. have illustrated how the Alliance can act collectively, through complementary ways to the efforts of various individual allies.

They also made clear the adaptability of the Alliance to the evolving conditions. In this regard, NATO's support for the African Union to strengthen its

³ Definition available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/glossary/eng/>

peacekeeping mission in the Darfur region of Sudan confirmed the progress made since 2002 in an attempt to make NATO's support available for non-NATO operations.

**PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMAND – CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS
SPECIFIC FOR THE ALLIANCES ROMANIA IS PART OF**

Although different from the purpose for which they were created, NATO and the EU have, in common, the capacity and political will to participate with other international structures in maintaining peace and stability in areas where Member States' interests are manifested.

The development of the security dimension of the EU⁴ and NATO's engagement in Crisis Management Operations⁵ (CMOs) outside the traditional area of action, gives the two organizations an undisputed status among the instruments available for the international community to solve crises. In its 60 years' existence NATO has developed and improved a set of action policies and procedures, based, mostly, on the use of the military instrument, whereas EU's experience in crisis management seems relatively recent⁶. The predominantly civilian nature of EU missions (although much of these were conducted with military contribution, both in the planning and in the execution phase) has not ruled out the concerns of the military structures to develop and refine crisis management doctrine, concepts and policies.

Regarding Command and Control capabilities, both organizations agreed, however, that whereas the majority of EU states are also NATO⁷ members, they should avoid duplication of efforts and development of parallel structures. Therefore, the specific command arrangements between NATO and the EU are based on the fact that participation in the CMOs is based on "*voluntarism*" principle, which means that both of them represent Force Contributing Member States no matter if they have had collective or individual interests.

The "*consensus*" - the basic principle governing the decision in both organizations, has a tinge of flexibility in the EU, which can ask for to the so-called "*constructive abstention*" in situations where consensus is not reached, so that the participation in such operations is not blocked.

⁴ The Treaty of the European Union, Brussels, 1992

⁵ The Strategic Concept of the Alliance', Brussels, 1999

⁶ European Security and Defense Policy, launched at the Summit in Cologne in 1999, became operational in 2001 with the creation of political-military structures within the second pillar of the EU.

⁷ 21 EU states are also NATO members. The exceptions are: Turkey, Norway, Island, USA and Canada

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An important principle from the perspective of command arrangements is the “*political control of operations*” carried out by NATO in the North Atlantic Council (NAC), and by EU in the Political and Security Committee (PSC), under the authority of the EU Council, by establishing the political and military objectives of the operations, as well as the goals and means to achieve them.

The principle of “*comprehensive approach to crisis management*”, characteristic for the EU, but also used increasingly by the Alliance, is the response to the military's inability to manage the crisis in the reconstruction and development fields all over the areas devastated by conflict or where institutions did not have the practice and administrative capacity for law enforcement.

Finally, the “*multinational*” principle, which is characteristic of both NATO and EU organizations, reflects the force generation process, taking into account operational requirements. Either member states or states that are not EU or NATO members but only troop contributing states, can participate in CMOs and therefore can be represented in the structures of Command and Control, taking into account that the command chain organization is the privilege of the operational commander.

At that point, it should be noted that for leading CMOs NATO can use a permanent command structure (consisting, at the strategic level, of the Allied Command of Operations - ACO, and, at the operational level, of three Joint Commands), while the EU has several options: to use national commands, made available by member states⁸, to request NATO assets and capabilities (known as Berlin+) or to activate the Operational Center of the General Secretary of the Council.

COMMAND AND CONTROL AUTHORITY IN MULTINATIONAL OPERATIONS IN WHICH THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES ARE INVOLVED

The detailed expressions of how to implement “Command and Control” have always been a “hot” topic on the agenda of the military and political leaders, especially in the last 18 years, when the spectacular developments in the security environment required finding solutions to this modern paradigm specifically reflecting participation in multinational operations. And the “Gordian knot” in solving this problem has undoubtedly been the custody of exercising authority over national forces by a foreign commander. While, within the traditional alliances, this issue has been largely solved by setting clear standards and procedures, the

⁸ Currently 5 member states provide the EU their national commands: France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Greece.

coalition's *ad hoc* command and control arrangements would be conditioned by the political arrangements among the participating States.

The fact that Romania belongs to both NATO and EU could induce the false idea that the problem of the operation's "C2" has been self achieved, simply by implementing the existing standards and procedures; the only remaining concern would be the implementation and compliance therewith. This is partly true, if we consider that throughout their evolution both organizations, especially NATO, have developed their own command structure which they exercised and continuously improved in order to meet the participants' operational requirements and sensitivities, so that they have finally proved great command arrangements guarantee stability.

By assuming the case of the multinational command arrangements which continue to be *"temporary arrangements established among the commanders of international forces and of various national ones made available on the level and limits of exercising authority over them, to achieve a common mission"*, it is necessary to highlight the shades which reflect the mechanism of very complex military operational leadership, regardless of circumstances and decisions which determine subordination of our national troops to the foreign commands.

First of all, the fact that the prerogatives of *"total control" (full command)*⁹ which fully empowers a national commander within the organization and employing forces in order to fulfill an entrusted mission are not assigned to an international commander by any state or government by derogation from its sovereign rights over the national forces participating in multinational operations. This means, of course, the common laws of the Alliance or Coalitions are recognized and respected by every single State or Government, even if the exercising of an "untotal" command by an international commander assumes a lower degree of authority than when used for purely domestic goals.

Romania could not be an exception to this rule, so that decisions regarding participation of national forces in the international missions abroad and specific command arrangements for each transaction shall be taken by the highest authorities of the state – the Parliament, the President of Romania, the Supreme Defense Council and the Government - and shall be implemented by the specific ministries. In the Armed Forces' case, the exercise of full command responsibility would depend fully on the National Command Authority.

At the same time, it must be accepted that in the case of multinational operations, which require a different assembly of forces to achieve a proposed

⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication 1-02, p. 8

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target, the commands cannot operate without the delegation of some national command prerogatives to an international commander.

Thus, the international commander could be charged with the "*operational command*" (OPCOM)¹⁰ responsibility, meaning the "*authority to establish missions and tasks to subordinates, to dislocate units, to allocate forces and to retain or delegate the operational and/or tactical control*" and stating the forces on which such authority could be exercised. Even in this case, however, reduction of national control over its own forces could occur, whereas in practice forces under OPCOM may be engaged in missions without the national authority approval, but must not be extracted from operations without the consent of the Command in charge.

For this reason, some countries¹¹ (USA, for example, and Romania too), keep the "operational command" (OPCOM) at the national level and delegate only "*operational control*" (OPCON)¹², namely "*authority to direct forces assigned for mission in order to accomplish the tasks*", which covers, in general, all aspects of conducting military operations, including joint training of forces, providing an international commander with maximum control of national forces without having full command prerogatives.

By extension, the delegation of the "*tactical command*" (TACOM)¹³, or "*tactical control*" (TACON)¹⁴ on national structures involves, in general, the application of the same principles as if OPCOM / OPCON, noting that "*they are targeted to a limited movement or maneuver control in the area of operations, just to perform the mission, at the tactical level*".

Finally, we have to emphasize that the delegation of command and control in international missions is the attribute of the only National Command Authority, and is achieved through "*transfer of authority*" (TOA)¹⁵ to the designated multinational command authority at the alliance or coalition level.

That is the case of the Romanian military forces engaged in international missions, for which the OPCOM is exercised by the Chief of Defense, through the Joint Operational Command, but OPCON is transferred, for each operation separately, by delegation of authority, to the international commanders designated by SHAPE or different other coalition authorities.

¹⁰ NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions, AAP-6, Brussels, p. 79

¹¹ Presidential Decision Directive-25 (PPD-25), 1996, pp. 4-6

¹² NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions, p. 79

¹³ Idem, p. 80

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 80

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 87

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CONCLUSIONS

Command and control are essential in any military operation or activity. When well exercised, command and control may represent the “*additional power*” or, on the contrary, a potential “*disaster*”, in case of deficiencies. Command arrangements must be sufficiently flexible to meet a wide variety of requirements, primarily political. In this respect, there is no universally valid recipe to be applied, each operation having its specificity.

Romania's participation in international missions along the Western Balkans, Iraq or Afghanistan, within both allied or coalition operations, has pointed out that although at the level of decision-making culture is a strong preserver of the centralized control keeping attributes, nowadays interpretations converge, ever more, to the idea of delegating responsibilities to the subordinated echelons.

