

## COUNTERING HYBRID THREATS BY INTEGRATING CIVILIAN-MILITARY CAPABILITIES

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***Abstract:** Proliferation of risks and of asymmetric, especially hybrid threats requires to generate integrating, comprehensive security solutions at national and international level. The beginning of the millennium highlights new ideas of conducting military conflicts. Thus, given the future combat, characterized by a high degree of complexity, when the military forces become joint multinational bodies, becoming aware of the importance of human terrain and of the necessity to develop new mechanisms to integrate capabilities and the effects of all the actions of military and civilian power instruments, represents, in my opinion, highly significant priorities.*

*Taking this into consideration, the following article presents some doctrinal concepts, mechanisms, principles and methods through which this desired purpose could be achieved.*

**Keywords:** hybrid threats, power instruments, integration, civil/military capabilities, integrative principles.

### 1. Introduction

In the future, traditional threats, that require a fundamentally distinct military approach, will be replaced by forces that will engage into using simultaneously conventional combat tactics and criminal activities (smuggling, illegal drug and weapons trafficking, narco-terrorism etc.) with the purpose of destabilizing governmental authorities and of achieving their personal and group interests.

The used tactics, techniques and procedures will continue to improve in order to use asymmetric/hybrid (military, economic, psychological, cybernetic etc.) means. These types of conflict go beyond the competences and possibilities of conventional military actions.

Any answers to hybrid threats will require comprehensive approaches by engaging a wide array of military, non-

military, governmental and non-governmental instruments. Integrated (interagency) actions, situated at a superior level, will not only mean joining governmental instruments, but also merging/integrating them, involving international and non-governmental organizations as well.

### 2. Integrating military and civilian capabilities terminology

Hybrid threats contain elements that, where appropriate, are mainly targeted to influence decisions in the political, diplomatic, military, economic and informational field. Most of the times, their origin is not clear or involves factors and actions from more fields.

Consequently, it is considered that future military operations, especially those within hybrid conflicts, those aiming at

managing crises and specific to post-conflict stage, will be more complex and multidimensional; therefore, a holistic approach, which involves political, military, diplomatic, civilian, economic etc. instruments, is considered to be successful.

Thus, the broad spectrum of hybrid threats requires from national and international institutions competent and coordinated answers, as well as civilian-military capabilities able to develop coherent and efficient actions within some integrated operations for conflict resolution.

In addressing the actual issue of integrating all military and civilian power instruments, it is useful to clearly define it by presenting the term and phrases that are operated with. Thus, “*to integrate*” means “*to include (oneself), to be incorporated, to harmonize into a whole*”[1].

In the field we are making reference to, an important aspect is represented by integrating the actions of the civilian and military governmental components, the effects of non-governmental organizations, and the military operations as well.

Thus, in our view, *integration* is a process through which the capabilities of a (military) joint force, together with those of other civilian organizations and agencies, combine in order to create coherent effects. The result is an *integrated force* group that requires strong and stable bonds at political, strategic, operational and tactical level, and is composed of structures belonging to all categories of the armed forces and to other national or international governmental and nongovernmental agencies.

The consequence is an *integrated approach*, which involves operations led and conducted through mutual understanding, trust and common goal. This approach combines in a unitary way all *civilian and military, intra and inter-state* system elements.

Starting from the realities of the asymmetric warfare in the Balkans, Iraq, and especially Afghanistan and Ukraine, it is stated that it is absolutely necessary for

governmental agencies and alliance partners to improve the necessary plans, in order to repel the insurgent, terrorist and organized crime actions directed towards national and alliance interests.

This requires modern *principles* of structuring and setting up the integrated force groups, and especially of *using* them to achieve coherent and comprehensive effects. Using forces means maximum rigor in planning the operations, in order to avoid unjustified human and material losses, confusion, disorder and especially failure to achieve the objectives set through general conception.

In this context, we suggest several approaches.

### **3. Knowing the human terrain – means of optimizing the comprehensive approach**

The new physiognomy of the hybrid and irregular warfare, whose purpose is to influence the civilian population and to gain its support, makes us take a more careful, more responsible look at the human communities in the area of military actions development.

The civilian population and local communities represent the new *center of gravity* of hybrid and irregular warfare. The insurgent groups, by influencing and controlling the civilian population, aim at undermining the authority of a legitimate government, of local authorities of the legally constituted international force.

Improvement of weapons and unprecedented development of “smart” ammunition made the new adversaries (insurgents and terrorists) hide in the only shelters that proved to protect them against the effects of the cutting edge technology – these shields are represented by human communities.

As a consequence, the conflict becomes extremely complex and manages not only to annihilate the technological differences, but also to create advantages by knowing the area and the human terrain.

The hybrid warfare is a political fight with violent and non-violent components. The goal of the fight is to gain control and influence over some target groups within neutral population.

At the same time, one tries, through *political, psychological and economic* methods, to exercise their authority over the majority of population. In this context, *Sociology, Psychology, Cultural Aspects* and *History* will have a word to say regarding the nature, the duration and the intensity of the conflict.

### 3.1. Human Terrain System

The military acting in a hybrid or irregular operational environment need to understand the specificity of the population from the following perspectives: social organization, ethnic division of the region, religion and, last but not the least, economy.

Thus, a special system (*Human Terrain System – HTS*) was implemented to support the American and NATO forces deployed in theatres of operations; it is composed of *Human Terrain Teams – HTTs*, containing five members each, anthropological experts that help military structures interact with the locals[2]. A thorough knowledge of the combat area is therefore achieved, not only through analysis of the physical terrain (geographical factors, season, weather etc.) and adversary capabilities, but also through analysis of the “*human terrain*”, the social, cultural, psychological, economic etc. factors specific to civilian population.

As stated by General Benjamin Freakley, commander of the multinational forces in Afghanistan in 2006, *cultural awareness will not necessarily always enable us to predict what the enemy and noncombatants will do, but it will help us better understand what motivates them, what is important to the host nation in which we serve, and how we can either elicit the support of the population or at least diminish their support and aid to the enemy*“[3].

Human Terrain Teams combine

military expertise with cultural anthropology knowledge. These are individuals who studied various regions of the world and who understand cultural inter-relations, and, at the same time, they are people who can give direct competent advice to commanders about they should and, especially, what they shouldn't do in their area of operations[4].

The role of Human Terrain Teams is to provide military commanders at operational and even tactical level eloquent information about local population, through[5]:

- Assisting them in understanding the people within their area of operations (AO).
- Enabling them to make better-informed decisions.
- Reducing the chance for negative effect responses such as improvised explosive device events directed at troops.

The members of these teams can be civilian anthropologists, as well as retired military specialized on fields of interests who offered to support the effort of developing integrating strategies to fight against hybrid and irregular risks and threats. More exactly, every team has a military leader, at least one sociologist and scientific researcher, an analyst familiarized with the cultural specificity of the area of responsibility, and a person knowing the dialect used in the region.

The success of these teams in Iraq and Afghanistan was obvious, preventing and managing, in various occasions, the conflicts between parties, and finding ways to communicate and to solve the problems appeared in different fields of activity. They also contributed to better understanding the situation, by adding ethnic and cultural perspectives.

### 3.2. Methods and instruments for knowing the human terrain

Neutral civilian population is the center of gravity of the new conflicts and “*the decisive terrain is the human terrain*”[6]. This emphasizes the fact that

civilian population, this “neutral-active” element, has an interchangeable character, oscillating between one or the other actor, according to the interests they promote and the events succeeding during their interaction.

Moreover, from the experience of the recent conflicts, Iraq, Afghanistan or Ukraine, Intelligent Preparation of the Battlespace is no longer enough. Precise understanding of the operational environment is required, including aspects related to local communities, thorough knowledge of what people mean, their social and cultural structures, their way of thinking and acting. One should “see” beyond the appearances.

In the new operational environment “*protecting the population is in fact the mission, (because) the conflict will be won by convincing/influencing the population and not by destroying the enemy*”[7].

A careful analysis of the considerations regarding civilian population is essential in order to obtain long term success.

For a correct analysis of the civilian population and informative training of the combat area, here included *human terrain* perspective, **several stages** should be followed.

a) *The first stage* should be *defining the civilian environment where the operations take place*

This stage involves collecting, classifying, organizing and recording the information and the results specific to activities regarding civilian population research/observation.

During the operations in the latest fights against a nonconventional adversary, a series of instruments were introduced, meant to analyze in detail:

- civilian-related aspects through ASCOPE (Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People, Events)[8];
- social-cultural factors through PMESII-PT (Political, Military, Economic,

Social, Infrastructure, Information, Physical Environment, and Time)[9].

b) *The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage* is represented by *human terrain analysis*. The analysis takes into consideration the operational variables, the operational culture and stability and/or instability dynamics. The end products include: *matrix of the identified civilian factors* (their relevancy), *cultural-operational panoply* and *analysis of the factors regarding the stability/instability*.

At this stage, the effort is to carefully examine the considerations regarding the civilians, using PMESII operational variables in order to establish the factors relevant for coalition operations and to contribute to understanding the dynamics of stability/instability in a given area.

c) *The 3<sup>rd</sup> stage* develops a *model of the civilian environment where the operations take place*. A model of the civilian environment in the area of operations should describe the complexity of the system of factors with a major impact on the mission. Such a model includes:

- a detailed analysis of what the civilian environment specific to the area of operations means;
- a list of the factors with major impact deducted by analytical methods;
- graphic materialization of the factors with major impact on a map or overlay.

d) *The 4<sup>th</sup> stage – Determining civilian population actions*. At this stage, activity is focused on determining/anticipating as accurately as possible civilian population actions – those that support the governmental forces actions, on the one hand, and those that help the insurgent groups, on the other hand. These elements offer an image as true as possible of what human terrain means, giving the planners the possibility to integrate the efforts of all participating forces in order to achieve the purpose of any mission: conflict situation stabilization and civilian population support.

To determine the actions of the civilian population that can influence or modify

mission accomplishment, one can take into consideration aspects such as:

- historical patterns of the population;
- the conditions the population tries to reach;
- the agenda and the objectives of the key factors in the area of operations.

The result of this last method is represented by the description and the graphic materialization of the most important possible actions of the civilian population: those that are an advantage and those that are a disadvantage for governmental forces.

#### 4. The Capabilities Integration Strategy

As we have stated before, the accent in the future operations will be laid on the increase of the *integrated application* of all power instruments and the forces and capabilities must be able to use an action method that is concerted from a political, civilian, military and scientific point of view coordinated between the governmental organizations (interagencies) and the non-governmental organizations in any situation, especially in reconstruction and stability operations.

Taking all these into account, we consider that an integrating document (*strategy or doctrine*), which will regulate the establishment, preparation and engagement conception of the capabilities intended for participating in the whole range of operations.

We are taking into consideration the elaboration of a document entitled “*The Capabilities Integration Strategy*”, based on the Constitution of Romania, its laws, the provisions of the National Defense Strategy, those of the Military Strategy, and of the other departmental strategies as well as those of NATO and EU documents in this domain.

The construction of the strategy should be of an *integrated* and *multinational* type, built on a scientific base, capable of generating the implementation of a new system of rules, procedures and standards derived from the experience and military actions undertaken

by NATO and the allies. *The Capabilities Integration Strategy* must address all the structures involved in the process of planning of the national (collective) defense[10].

#### 5. Conclusions

To conclude, we can state the fact that, by becoming aware of the human terrain importance and by using these instruments, a strong connection is made and maintained with the civilian component (population and civilian actors in the area of operations), facilitating cooperation, harmonization of activities, information exchange, comprehensive planning and conduct of operations. This approach supports the following objectives:

- to provide an overall analysis of the civilian situation;
- to evaluate the civilian environment, to identify the key factors and the impact on military operations, and also the way in which military operations influence civilian population life;
- to establish and to recommend the military activities with maximum effects upon influencing the civilian population, but with minimum disruptive effects;
- to promote amongst the civilian population a state of mind favorable to governmental forces support;
- to contribute to influence the entire civilian society in the theatre of operations (final objective) in order to build durable stability/peace.

Knowing the local population in a region offers the military an environment adequate for planning and developing coherent operations, by strictly controlling the proportion between the assigned objectives, the actions they do and the behavior of the local population.

Regardless of the typology of the actors involved in conflict dynamics, be them military, civilian structures, governmental, non-governmental organizations or media agencies, they all have different objectives and interests in the

theatres of operations. These objectives will lead to distinct policies and behavior, that are, many times, in conflict. The problem that should be solved depends on the capacity of these actors to find the correct necessary procedures in order to show their interests, in a spirit of complementarity, cooperation and mutual respect, both at conceptual and acting level.

There are no recipes of full integration, but the communication and the behavioral adaptation of organizations should be done in such a way that dissensions be diminished and the common objective reached with acceptable efforts.

Likewise, one can highlight the necessity of a culture of integration and

coordination of civilian and military instruments, meant to provide a functional synergy of all mechanisms and structures, regardless of interests and subordinations.

Thus, the integrated (multilateral and interdepartmental) approach of the issue of coordinating the power instruments in hybrid warfare continues to reveal a series of challenges that analysts, theoreticians and deciding factors should discuss: existence of planning and command parallel structures, lack of specialists with experience and authority, different or even antagonistic organizational cultures, as well as financing mechanisms different for civilian and military instruments.

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