



## Act

Winning the Battle Leading to Peace – Land Forces in Conflicts Today and Tomorrow

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**Increasingly strong European integration will multiply common commitments while NATO remains, in part, the framework for defining the interoperability of our forces and for our training.**

**Coalitions of the willing could become the preferred framework for many future operations.**

**However, there are many constraints to multinational engagement. As an important factor of legitimacy, it is not, intrinsically, a factor of military effectiveness.**

### **1 - L'JOINT ACTION AT THE HEART OF AIR-LAND COMBAT**

Air-to-land combat is inherently joint in nature. The characteristics of an extremely varied and segmented environment make it impossible to concentrate on a single unit or platform all the functions necessary for a given combat. Joint combat combines within tactical structures the effects of operational functions ("weapons") that are usually distributed among separate units. It is the key to joint integration and its control enables the commander of an operation to have an air-land force acting coherently on and close to the ground while ensuring the necessary complementarity with other armies.

Joint combat responds perfectly to the growing importance of action in urbanised areas, which makes coordination of effects even more necessary. In this compartmentalised environment with limited space, success cannot be conceived without a combination and temporary integration of the various capabilities. During conflict, the diversity of situations and the changing conditions for the use of force reinforce the need for joint action.

Long limited downwards to the brigade level and then to the battlegroup level, i.e. to battalion or regimental structures, joint action is now necessary at subordinate levels. Infantry companies and armoured squadrons must be able to form the backbone of joint

battle group sub-groups that can be used to provide the necessary contact or support functions for a given mission. Furthermore, particularly in a compartmentalized environment, it is often useful to form small joint detachments of the size and value of a platoon or even a group.

Finally, in moving from the initial intervention involving operational functions optimised for this purpose, to a stabilisation phase aimed at reducing the number of personnel involved, the aim is to ensure that the mission can be carried out as efficiently and effectively as possible. Finally, in moving from the initial intervention, where optimised operational functions are involved, to a stabilisation phase aimed at establishing the conditions for peace, land forces are seeing their capability requirements evolve through a sharp increase in environmental control, security and mobility functions at the expense of those of destruction and aggression. However, if they are to be able to move into the background, weapons of destruction must be immediately available as they are still necessary to deter an adversary or to coerce him if violence resumes. Therefore, all units must be able to carry out forms of joint action adapted to stabilisation and then normalisation and have a common training base that strengthens the adaptability and reversibility of land forces in theatres of operation.

Inseparable from land action, the **need for joint combat is reinforced by the importance of combat** in urbanised areas and the variety of situations or conditions for the use of force.

For a long time limited downwards at the battlegroup level, joint action is routinely necessary at the **lowest** levels. On the other hand, the capability requirements of land forces are evolving towards a reduced need for destruction and aggression functions and a strong growth in environmental control and security functions.

## **2 - UN PERMANENT JOINT FRAMEWORK**

The variety of engagements places land combat in a permanent joint framework that transcends the exclusive competencies of each army. Land forces operate in joint ensembles whose interdependence of the different components (armies and services) is becoming stronger every day.

Command of an operation is always joint at the strategic level, either within the armed forces staff or within an alliance or international organisation to which it may be delegated. In each theatre, it is also at the operational level and the force commander, COMANFOR, has a joint command post. It may be at the tactical level when the size or characteristics of the forces warrant a high degree of integration or in the development of joint components for amphibious, airborne, or special operations.

In addition, the increasing coordination of certain functions, the sharing of similar types of equipment, or operational or organizational requirements may extend joint integration down to the lowest levels in some areas.

While the component supported by the others may vary during an operation, the land component almost always plays a major role.

In the intervention phase, the main role is played by one or other of the components depending on the objectives and capabilities to be implemented. This is the case, for example, for air or maritime forces when it comes to reducing adverse capabilities by fire prior to a ground offensive or an amphibious or airborne assault. The air and naval air

operations of the Gulf War in 1991, Kosovo in 1999 or Afghanistan in 2001 are perfect examples. But destroying enemy capabilities or denying access to a particular area from a distance is not enough for success. There always comes the moment when ground engagement is necessary. Despite the ability of other armies to inflict serious damage on the opposing force, only ground forces can conquer and hold an objective, secure conquered areas or defeat enemy ground forces, i.e. win the decision.

In the stabilization and normalization phases, the ground engagement of land forces plays a preponderant role. In the stabilization and normalization phases, the ground engagement of land forces plays a major role in the deterrent effect of the joint force, on the human environment or for the access of international and non-governmental organizations to the area. Their presence is also proof of the country's political will. Permanent adaptation, knowledge of the environment, evaluation and, therefore, the indispensable capacity for discrimination, give the men and women present in the field the main role.

More than ever at the forefront, the land forces are acting in almost the entire conflict with the support of the other components in a genuine land-based joint combat.

### **3 - LA MULTINATIONALITY, LEGITIMACY AND CONSTRAINT**

The commitment of forces within a multinational framework is becoming the norm, as the international community no longer conceives of conflict management outside a multilateral framework whose legality is generally ensured by the United Nations. Moreover, the commitment of several forces reinforces the legitimacy of action when the unilateral operation of a single one can cast doubt on political intentions and objectives. Observation shows that the conduct of an operation and the process of emerging from a crisis are closely linked to the legality and legitimacy of the armed intervention and the internal and external support it generates. Finally, the cost and multiplication of military operations lead the states involved to seek within coalitions to share the financial burden and burdens.

For our country, growing European integration will increase the number of joint commitments by the land forces of the different countries of the Union, including the Concordia operations in Macedonia (2002), Artemis in Ituri (2003), EUFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004) and the setting up of a European force in the Republic of Congo in 2006 are the first steps. Likewise, the political and economic requirements of this integration are generating a relative community of land forces equipment, a source of operational coherence and cost control. At the same time, as NATO is still the framework for our collective defence, it remains, in part, the framework for our training and for defining the interoperability of our forces.

However, as states are increasingly reluctant to be automatic while wishing to engage in crisis management, coalitions of the willing could become the preferred framework for future operations. This should lead the army to have to engage, on the one hand, in the framework of coalitions of militarily and technologically advanced nations and, on the other hand, in that of heterogeneous coalitions with unequal standards oriented towards operations focused on stabilisation.

However, whatever the type of alliance or coalition, and even if it responds to a political necessity and a concern for the legitimacy of the action, the multinational nature of the commitments creates difficulties. Indeed, the demands of different partners to bring their areas of excellence to bear in order to ensure their influence within coalitions can

unbalance the composition of a force. In addition, technical and operational inequalities, for example between a digitalized and a non-digitalized force, can create a potential for conflict. In addition, technical and operational inequalities, such as between a digitalized force and an undigitalized one, can create interoperability problems and capability inconsistencies that a skilled adversary can exploit. Despite its inevitability, multinationality sometimes weakens the military effectiveness of the force, requires the pursuit of costly interoperability in terms of equipment and procedures, and makes the management of rules of engagement more complex.

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