

# **PARTICULARITIES REGARDING THE USE OF PLANNING METHODOLOGIES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF LAND FORCES' MILITARY OPERATIONS**

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**Abstract:** *The manifestation of different dissensions regarding the use of planning methodologies in the operations process has become a reality, both at national level and within NATO. Therefore, this research paper contributes to the theoretical clarification on defining the specific methodologies, respectively their employment in relation to the level of Land Forces military operations. Another objective of this paper is to make a comparative analysis between the design methodology, military decision making process (MDMP) and troop leading procedures (TLP), targeting the military structures within the Land Forces, and those belonging to NATO. Also, at the end, the paper highlights some perspectives of improving planning, as the primary activity which starts the operations process.*

**Keywords:** *planning methodologies; TLP; MDMP; ADM; operational art.*

## **Introduction**

Over time, the operations process has undergone significant changes in order to respond to the need of adapting to the volatile factors specific to the operational environment. From the perspective of characteristic activities, planning and execution have been the most targeted by adjusting measures, even now the conjugated efforts being made to reduce the gap of differences between estimated activities and those actually performed in the field by engagement forces.

Therefore, out of the four distinct activities of the operations process, special attention during scientific research conducted in the field of military operations, is paid to planning, because the most accurate estimation of the adversary corroborated with the analysis and processing of the characteristics specific to the area of operations (AO), materialized in the visualization of the probable effects over the fighting parties, so as to ensure, to a large extent, the success of the execution, and, consequently, the achievement of the proposed end state.

Analyzing planning as an activity that initiates the operations process, the main challenges are correlated with the use of specific methodologies in accordance with the level of military operations. More specifically, if troops leading procedures (TLP) do not create application difficulties, we cannot say the same thing about the military decision making process (MDMP) or design methodology, and on these considerations the primary objective of the research can be generated as follows: *What planning methodologies are used by the Land Forces' structures for the tactical and operational levels?* Other objectives dedicated to this research consist in clarifying, from a theoretical view, the planning typology, respectively the planning methodologies used in national and alliance context (NATO).

## **Conceptual planning versus detailed planning**

Solving these research dilemmas has as a starting point the clarification of the planning fundamentals, directing towards the actual planning, the conceptual, detailed and integrated planning. For defining the actual planning, as an activity dedicated to the operations process, there are several variants, yet having a common denominator. According to the United States Army's doctrine, planning is "*the art and science of understanding a situation, envisioning a desired future, and determining effective ways to bring that future about*"<sup>1</sup>. Also, in relation to NATO doctrine, the essence of planning is to "*synchronize the actions of forces in time, space,*

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<sup>1</sup> ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington D.C., July 2019, p. 2-1.

and purpose to achieve objectives”<sup>2</sup>. Other planning benchmarks are related to the moment of its initiation and completion. Consequently, the initiation of planning occurs once the order was received from higher, sometimes being triggered by the commander’s initiative, in which case he must inform the hierarchical structure. Instead, even if there is a strong tendency to state that the completion of planning takes place upon receipt of the operations order (*OPORD*) by the subordinate structures, it has a permanent character, continuing during the preparation and execution activities.

Regarding the other forms of planning, their theoretical analysis provides essential clues in deciphering the first objective of the research. Table 1 briefly highlights the main theoretical benchmarks needed to differentiate conceptual, detailed and integrated planning.

Table 1. Typology of planning

Forms	Specific benchmarks	
	Theoretical	Reference questions
Conceptual planning	“corresponds to the art of operations and is the focus of a commander ... establishes objectives as well as a broad approach for achieving them ... includes commander’s intent and operational approach” <sup>3</sup>	WHAT + WHY to do?
Detailed planning	“translates the broad operational approach into a complete and practical plan ... falls under the purview of the staff, focusing on specifics of execution” <sup>4</sup> ; ensures the plan’s production based on the objectives established within conceptual planning; different from conceptual planning, it “creates a logical succession of activities and instructions to put into effect the commander’s intention and the design of the operation” <sup>5</sup>	HOW to do?
Integrated planning	involves the correlation of conceptual planning (commander attribute) with detailed planning (staff attribute); it is the planning form recommended during the operations process.	WHAT + WHY + HOW to do?

A first conclusion that can be deduced is the idea that the application of integrated planning, coagulated by the coherent relationship of conceptual and detailed planning, provides answers on how to approach the operation, both in terms of probable generic solutions and those necessary to develop them, in detail.

Moving on with the current research, the subsidiary question that arises and needs to be answered in order to achieve the primary research objective is the following: *How can planning methodologies be categorized in relation to conceptual and detailed planning?*

Again, the United States Army doctrine is conclusive, providing essential clarifications and categorizing planning methodologies as follows: Army Design Methodology (*ADM*), *MDMP* and *TLP*<sup>6</sup>. The correlation of these methodologies in integrated planning can be understood based on interpreting the figure below.

<sup>2</sup> APP-28, *Tactical Planning for Land Forces*, Edition A, Version 1, NATO Standardization Office (NSO), November 2019, p. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., July 2019, pp. 2-15 – 2-16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2-16.

<sup>5</sup> Tudorel Lehaci, *Challenges Regarding Tactical Operations Planning in a Multinational Environment*. In Conference Proceedings, Strategies XXI, volume XV, part 1 „Technologies – Military Applications, Simulation and Resources”, „Carol I” National Defense University, April 11-12, 2019, p. 310.

<sup>6</sup> ATP 5-0.1, *Army Design Methodology*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., July 2015, p. 1-3.

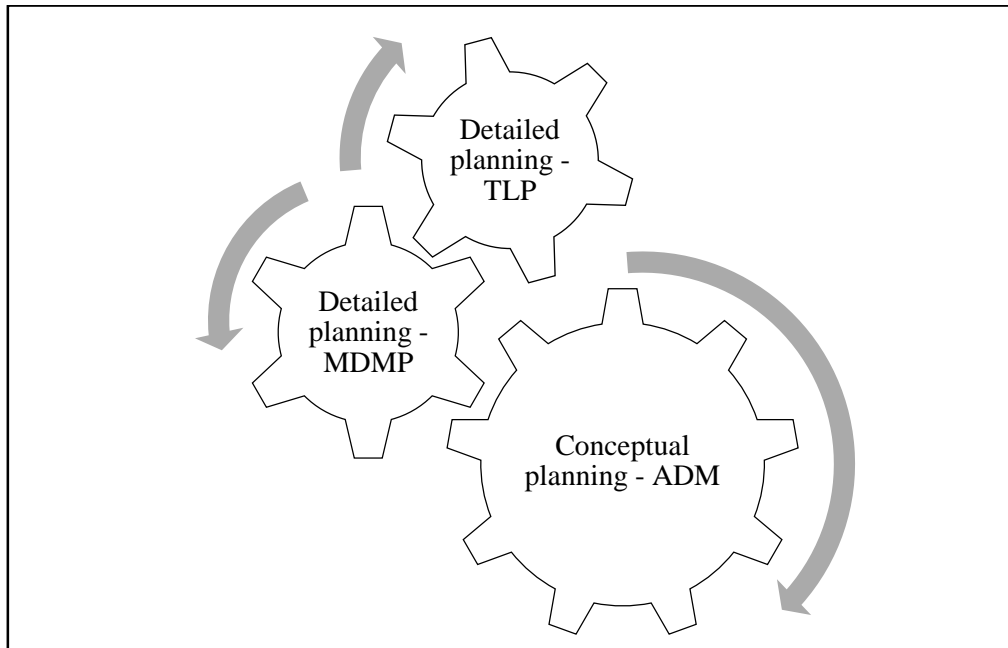


Figure. 1. Performing integrated planning during the operations process (figure made after ATP 5-0.1<sup>7</sup>)

Therefore, the harmonious relationship of these methodologies creates the necessary conditions for the successful implementation of integrated planning, which can be translated into executable plans (OPORD), whose application will ensure to subordinate forces the possibility of applying the approved course of action (COA), respectively to fulfill the established missions and tasks.

### The applicability of planning methodologies

Usually, the theoretical approach of planning methodologies does not create difficulties, each being defined coherently in specific regulations. Briefly, analyzing the specialized sources, the definition of each methodology can be summarized at:

- the TLP: “dynamic process used by small-unit leaders to analyze a mission, develop a plan, and prepare for an operation”<sup>8</sup>; specific steps are: “receive the mission, issue a warning order, make a tentative plan, initiate movement, conduct reconnaissance, complete the plan, issue the order, supervise and refine”<sup>9</sup>;

- the MDMP: “an iterative planning methodology to understand the situation and mission, develop a course of action, and produce an operation plan or order”<sup>10</sup>; it comprises seven distinct steps: “receipt of mission, mission analysis, COA development, COA analysis, COA comparison, COA approval, orders production”<sup>11</sup>;

- the ADM: “a methodology for applying critical and creative thinking to understand, visualize, and describe unfamiliar problems and approaches to solving them”<sup>12</sup>; it is performed through conceptual planning, combining “operational art, critical thinking and creative thinking, collaboration and dialogue, systems thinking, framing, visual modeling, narrative construction”<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2-2.

<sup>8</sup> ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., July 2019, p. 2-18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2-17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2-18.

<sup>12</sup> ATP 5-0.1, *Army Design Methodology*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., July 2015, p. 1-3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1-5.

A considerable contribution to the quality of planning belongs to the operational art, which, as can be understood from the above definition, is a constant factor in the use of ADM. Being defined as “*the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs – supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment – to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means*”<sup>14</sup>, the operational art is applied at all levels of military operations (tactical, operational, strategic).

Opening another parenthesis, regarding the MDMP, analyzing the NATO doctrine, recently has formalized the planning methodology for the tactical military structures, which, until recently, was not available. Broadly speaking, it follows the format of the MDMP, with the differences that step 6 (COA approval) is named the commander’s decision and the characteristic steps are grouped into three distinct phases, as shown in table 2.

Phases	Steps	Sub-steps
Understanding the situation and problem	Step 1 - receipt of mission	
	Step 2 - mission analysis	Order analysis Evaluation of factors
Considering and developing COAs	Step 3 - COA development	
	Step 4 - COA analysis	
	Step 5 - COA comparison	
Communicating	Step 6 - commander’s decision	
	Step 7 - order production, dissemination, and transition	

Table 2. The methodology for tactical planning – NATO Land Forces (table made after APP-28<sup>15</sup>)

Having settled the necessary context to generate the answer of the essential research objective, it can be stated that there are two variants of the planning methodologies’ applicability, as follows:

- consecutive: ADM → MDMP → TLP;
- parallel – involving their concomitant use, the correlation of the MDMP with TLP being achieved by issuing the warning orders (WARNOs).

Also, correlating the highlighted aspects with the careful study of specialized sources, respectively with personal experiences in carrying out various exercises and missions, it can be concluded that there are two currents on using the planning methodologies in accordance with the level of military operations (tactical, operational).

The first one, the United States Army current, is based on using all methodologies analyzed at the tactical level, where the MDMP and TLP are directed by the commander through ADM, the latter being catalyzed by the elements of operational art.

The second current, specific to several NATO Land Forces, is almost similar to the first, less in terms of the applicability of ADM and, in particular, operational art, which is more specific to the operational level of warfare. In both variants, the TLP applies to tactical military structures such as the platoon and the company, different from the MDMP, characteristic of tactical military structures with organic staff, ranging from battalion to division, included (there are Land Forces that apply the MDMP only up to brigade level).

<sup>14</sup> Joint Publications 3-0, *Joint Operations*, Department of Defense, October 2018, p. II-3.

<sup>15</sup> APP-28, *Tactical Planning for Land Forces*, Edition A, Version 1, NATO Standardization Office (NSO), November 2019, pp. 2-1 – 2-2.

## Conclusions

The planning activity, promoter of the operations process, has generated and continues to generate operational challenges to the extent that, in order to be overcome, it requires sustained efforts in terms of flexibility and adaptation of military structures, especially at the level of commander and staff.

As noted, the planning challenges are coagulated more based on the background of the MDMP and ADM's applicability, their different use during NATO Land Forces' operations giving rise to misunderstandings and animosities with negative effects on the quality of planning and operation, as a whole. These doctrinal inconsistencies can be catalyzed by the lack of quality and expertise of the planning staff, but also by the insufficiency of the capabilities available to the planning structures. For example, in a configuration of multinational forces, with organic S5-plans and S3-current operations, these planning differences can generate negative effects on estimating the actions of own forces in relation to the opponents and the operational environment (S5 responsibility), modeling, at the end, the outcome of the operation, due to the fact that S3 has applied the plan generated by S5 as it was initially designed and briefed during its transition.

However, blaming the planning shortcomings for multinational military structures, NATO eventually responded, succeeding in formalizing a tactical level specific planning methodology, which probably will reduce the use by each national contingent of own planning repertoire.

Moreover, within the alliance, the trends of planning optimization, manifested within the Land Forces of some member armies, such as the development, integration and exploitation of new technologies, focused on dedicated software or Artificial Intelligence (AI), can significantly reduce the differences occurring during operation's planning. Therefore, technology becomes "*a key element that will allow combatants to fight smarter, faster and act more efficiently ...*"<sup>16</sup>.

To come to an end, both the common training of member states in the various specific initiatives and especially the conjugated action during different multinational missions, will be the optimum strategy that will ultimately solve these doctrinal differences connected to the applicability of planning methodologies, and in particular, regarding the correlation of the MDMP with ADM, on the one hand, and on the other hand the operational level of using the latter one.

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<sup>16</sup> Cristian-Octavian Stanciu, *Implicațiile sistemelor și tehnologiilor moderne în redefinirea unor noi concepte doctrinare*. În Buletinul Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, nr. 1, Martie 2015, p. 166.