

REORGANIZING THE TACTICAL MILITARY STRUCTURES UNDER FORMULA OF THE BATTLE GROUPS

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Abstract: *The accentuated dynamics of the operational environments, with direct impact on the areas of responsibilities (AOR) and areas of operations (AO), determines the need for the Land Forces to adapt operationally, having profound implications on their task organizations' adjustment. For these reasons, the paper sets out the principles for reconfiguring the tactical structures from Land Forces under the umbrella of battle groups (BGs), to meet current and future operational challenges. Also, the main analysis is pointed at determining the organizational formulas of the BGs, configured on the battalion task organizations, suitable for full spectrum operations (FSO), imprinting the staff, as well as the combat, combat support (CS), and combat service support forces (CSS).*

Keywords: *modularity; versatility; battle group (BG); modular structure; task organization.*

Introduction

The increased volatility of the security environment with direct transposition on the constituent elements such as the operational environments (OE), is more and more demanding from the perspective of the approach strategies used, regardless of the political, economic, and military nature of the capabilities employed. Regarding the military response, more specifically, the use of military structures of the Land Forces, practically, every time when they are engaged in a new operation, they are forced to face unprecedented operational challenges. Although their spectrum is quite wide, the most sensitive challenges arise during the operations process, especially in planning and execution, for the simple fact that between these two activities there are significant mismatches in terms of operational approach, because the reality from the field differs essentially from previous planning.

Therefore, the military structures of the Land Forces, but especially the tactical ones, should have the ability to visualize and also manage the requirements for operational adaptation which, as we know it, necessarily involve reconfigurations of the tactical military forces' task organization. Practically, all these operational challenges can be primarily reduced by rethinking the organizational structure of the employment forces, so that they have a high degree of versatility allowing them to perform multiple tasks in any area of operations (AO). Also, the versatility of the force, in order to generate the desired effects, will have to spread to all organic elements, such as headquarter (HQ), combat (CBT), combat service support (CSS), respectively combat support (CS).

Modularity – fundamental principle of reconfiguring the Land Forces

In order to build and generate the degree of versatility necessary to approach OE and implicitly AO, a solution may be to reconfigure the tactical organizational structures by applying the principle of modularity, whose promoter is the United States Army, using it for the first time to boost force effectiveness. Although there are a variety of definitions in the international military literature, the same cannot be said when analyzing national doctrine, even if this principle has also been used out of a desire to respond to the need of adapting the Land Forces. One of the best known definitions given to modularity, identifies it as “*a force design methodology that establishes a means to provide interchangeable, expandable, and tailorable force elements*”¹. On the other hand, the principle of modularity must be supported by other additional principles, which are summarized in table 1.

¹ TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5, *Force XXI Operations. A Concept for the Evolution of Full-Dimensional Operations for the Strategic Army of the Early Twenty-First Century*, August 1994, p. Glossary 5.

Table 1. Principles adjacent to modularity

Principles	Significance
Doctrinal flexibility	It is transposed on the fact that “leaders have the skill to apply those principles in ways as varied ... At the center of this flexible doctrine are our quality leaders and soldiers ... Having practiced the application of principles in varied scenarios, our soldiers and leaders will be able to continually adapt tactics, techniques, procedures, and organizations to meet future requirements” ² .
Strategic/ operational mobility	It refers to “being at the right place at the right time with the right capabilities. It is about a combination of anticipation, movement, and skillful prepositioning” ³ ; applying this principle, modular structures in the form of battle groups (BG) will be able to be deployed at strategic/operational distances in relation to the mission requirements.
Joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multinational connectivity	It involves supporting the elements of the modular force with multiple capabilities to be able to carry out multidomain operations (MDO); it has a full impact on operational support (OS) performed in tactical, operational and strategic landscape.

On the other hand, modularity can be temporary or permanent, both variants having advantages and disadvantages. In the first situation, the temporary modularity, it can be really at hand for those Land Forces that are in the development stage, not having all the necessary capabilities, the configuration of the modular structure being settled after mission analysis. The second situation, permanent modularity, can be applied when the Land Forces have already the required capabilities, such as those belonging to the United States of America (USA), in the form of brigade combat teams (BCTs), which harmonize the entire suite of CBT, CS, and CSS elements, supported by tactical, operational and even strategic OS. One of the most redoubtable BCTs is considered Stryker Brigade, given that it “presents the greatest utility in or near urban terrain”⁴, representing, in general, the result of the mixture between a heavy brigade and a light one.

Regarding the advantages of applying modularity at the level of tactical forces, in addition to those already highlighted, they can be translated into:

- versatility at the staff (*Headquarters – HQ*) level and subordinate forces (CBT, CS, CSS);
- high tactical mobility, resulting from the improvement of the three specific variables, such as movement, fire and protection;
- amplified combat power, generated by correlating the organic capabilities with the multilevel and/or multidomain OS;
- effective joint, interagency, multinational, cooperation, sometimes, even in the intergovernmental field (indirect character);
- full exploitation of new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI);
- high ability to adapt to the changes of operational environment;
- boosting the mission command through assuming by commanders the responsibilities that, as a rule, exceed their own decision-making gap, on one hand, respectively the development of mental agility, on the other hand.

The correlation of these operational advantages will ensure for the modular tactical structures (BGs) a sufficient degree of operational flexibility, practically, being less exposed to the challenges encountered in approaching various operations.

The applicability of modularity at the battalion level

Most of the time, modularity is applied within the Land Forces for structures as division (DIV) or brigade (BDE), few initiatives existing at the battalion (BN) level. For BN variant, most uses of modularity are temporary in nature and coagulate, in general, after mission

² *Ibidem*, p. 3-1.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Stuart E. Johnson, John E. Peters, Karin E. Kitchens, Aaron Martin, Jordan R. Fischbach, *A Review of the Army’s Modular Force Structure*, RAND Corporation, 2012, p. 13.

analysis, the latter one having a predominant allied character. However, there are also BGs based on permanent modularity such as European Battle Group (*EU BG*), considered “combined (joint) arms battalion sized force reinforced with CS and CSS elements”⁵ and which, broadly speaking, include⁶:

- dedicated HQ and communication and information systems (*CIS*) support;
- CBT/CS/CSS personnel – around 1500;
- tactical/operational OS enablers.

Having highlighted the advantages of modular structures and the example of EU BGs as permanent modular structures, further research will focus on stressing the principle of reconfiguring tactical military structures of Land Forces in the formula of the BGs, with BN⁺ level. (figure 1).

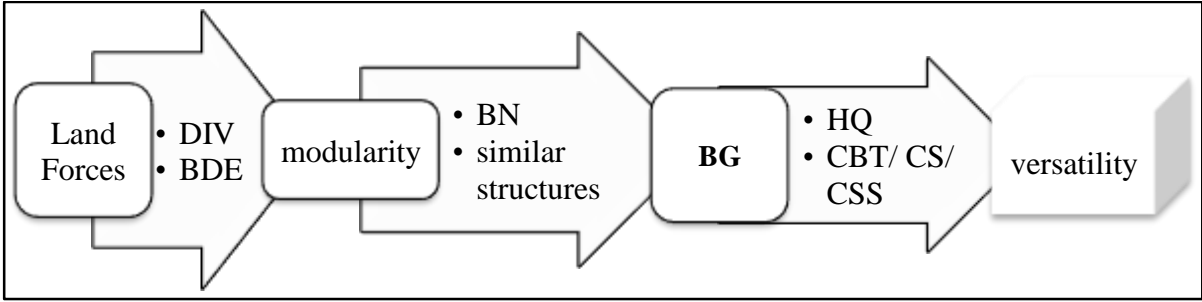


Figure 1. The principle of generating BGs (BN⁺ level) in the Land Forces

Also, the implementation of the above principle will provide BGs with the essential attributes necessary to operate in any AO, such as those from figure 2. As for new technologies, they will have to ensure “rapid analysis, advice and courses-of-action for strategic-operational-tactical planning, allowing for increased OODA (Observe-Orient-Decide-Act) loop effectiveness and bringing an entirely different perspective on old problems unconstrained by old strategies”⁷.

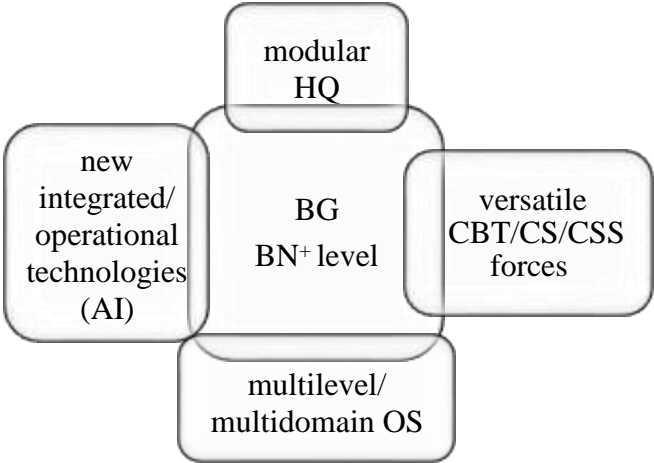


Figure 2. Attributes associated with BG

⁵ FINABEL Study Nr A.25.R-T.37.R, *European Union Battlegroup Manual (Guidance for operational preparation and tactical use)*, Mikkeli, Finland, June 2014, p. 10.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ STO, *Science & Technology Trends 2020-2040. Exploring the S&T Edge*, Brussels, NATO Science & Technology Organization, 2020, p. 9.

All these attributes, properly built, will ensure an extra robustness to the modular structures, with BN⁺ level, being much more able to carry out tactical tasks and activities in the full spectrum of operations (*FSO*).

More specifically, using an infantry BN task organization, its transformation into a modular structure, BG type, involves several organizational insertions, as those pictured in table 2.

Table 2. Elements from BG task organization configured on the infantry BN

HQ			
- resized on the HQ BDE, multinational type: modules ranging from S1 to S9; - at least S2 and S3 should be catalyzed by AI enablers; - during the operations process, HQ operates on functional cells, applying the combat functions, respectively, on integration cells, divided in plans, current operations and future operations.			
CBT	CS	CSS	HQ
- three infantry companies and one armored/ mechanized company ⁸ ; - each company is organized on three maneuver platoons and one heavy weapons platoon ⁹ ; - HQ company should be boosted by AI enablers; - maneuver platoons should be reinforced with AI lethal capabilities able to autonomously perform the targets' acquisition and engagement.	- one dedicated CS company, which includes at least reconnaissance elements, combat engineering, mortars, antitank platforms, unmanned aerial platforms for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (<i>ISR</i>), ground surveillance radars ¹⁰ , air defense artillery (<i>ADA</i>), CBRN, CIS; - CS company should be reinforced by AI capabilities, both at the level of dedicated HQ, but also at the level of the suitable organic elements.	- one dedicated company, having in its task organization elements of supply, maintenance, transportation, and medical ¹¹ ; - all these CSS elements should be augmented by force sustainment (<i>FS</i>), multilevel and/or multidomain type, no matter of the operational range.	- one dedicated company, including elements of military police (<i>MP</i>), civil-military cooperation (<i>CIMIC</i>), human intelligence (<i>HUMINT</i>), psychological operations (<i>PSYOPS</i>) ¹² , electronic warfare (<i>EW</i>); - it is possible to choose that SIG elements from CS company be included within this company task organization .

This BG configuration includes the minimum organic elements to respond to FSO requirements, even those that have appeared in approaching the urban AOs. Regarding the exercise of the tactical/operational/strategic OS in support of BGs' combat power, it may vary, including fire support with field artillery (*FA*) or fixed wing (*FW*)/rotary wing (*RW*) platforms, special operations forces (*SOF*), information operations (*IO*), lethal/nonlethal MDO.

Conclusions

Considering the highlighted aspects, it is easy understandable that the Land Forces must face the situation of identifying solutions for reconfiguring their task organizations, as a basis of operational adaptation, so as to allow them to create and maintain operational advantages in relation to the opponent, regardless his nature.

The variant developed in this research has a character of novelty and originality, due to the fact that modularity is not addressed to tactical structures, DIV or BDE level, but to BN forces in the form of BGs, for two reasons: the first one consists in the tendency of some important armies to resize their Land Forces, where their core to coagulate on modular

⁸ FINABEL Study ENG.3.R, *Land Units Capability Requirements for Expeditionary Operations in a Complex Operational Environment*, Evora, Portugal, July 2013, p. 43.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*.

structures, BN type; second one, is correlated with the lessons learned from the recent operational experiences that have shown the difficulty of using DIV/BDE structures in a compact form, being suitable rather modular BN forces.

On the other hand, the configuration of the proposed BG can be adapted to all campaign themes from peace military engagement (*PME*), whose intensity of combat actions is low, to those specific to combat operations, where the fighting actions reach maximum levels.

Also, another principle that was the basis of the BG designed in table 2, is given by the need for organic forces to shift unexpectedly from one campaign theme to another even within the same AO, more specifically, from a peace support operation (*PSO*) to stability or combat operation (and vice versa), requesting from them high adaptive capacities transposed in the development, in a various volume, of all tactical activities such as offensive, defensive, stability and enabling.

Finally, it can be concluded that the BG structure is only a variant that may undergo changes based on further research. What is quite important to remember is the need to reorganize the Land Forces' structures on the modularity principle, with direct impact on BN structures in the form of BGs. In this organizational formula, supported of course, by appropriate operational adaptation, the Land Forces will be able to ensure the required readiness capacity necessary to perform, effectively and efficiently, specific missions and tasks.

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