

# COMPREHENSIVE INTEGRATION OF POWER INSTRUMENTS AND CIVIL-MILITARY CAPABILITIES FOR COUNTERING HYBRID THREATS

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## **Abstract**

Given the future military confrontations characterized by an increased degree of complexity, multidimensionality and ambiguity, the article aims to raise awareness of the need, and also to develop effective mechanisms for a comprehensive and integrated approach to capabilities and effects of the actions of all power instruments, military and civilian, governmental and non-governmental, national and international, in countering the consequences of hybrid threats.

**Keywords:** hybrid threats; comprehensive and integration; power instruments; civil-military capabilities; countering hybrid warfare.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In hybrid conflicts, the actors have elements that, as the case may be, are mainly directed towards affecting decisions in the political, diplomatic, social, military, economic, informational, etc. fields. In most cases, their nature is unclear, ambiguous and also involves factors and actions in several areas.

The operational environment, which has become particularly complex and unpredictable due to the involvement of civilian actors, the civilian population, of cultural and psychological factors, required increasing the degree of civil-military integration and reviewing working methods and tools towards conflict management.

Also, as a result of the multiplication and diversification of the situations in which military structures are called to intervene, and of the amplification of operational needs dictated by the hybrid operational environment, there was a need to create (integrated) force structures adaptable to new types of risks and threats.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The hypothesis was that, following the multiplication and diversification of situations in which security structures are called to intervene and the amplification of operational needs dictated by the hybrid operational environment, a comprehensive approach is not enough; what is needed is a *comprehensive and integrated* approach to all power tools, and to civilian and military capabilities.

Using specific theoretical and methodological tools, we analyzed the multidimensionality of the hybrid operational environment in correlation with the dynamics of the actions of the actors involved.

The critical analysis aimed both to clarify some aspects characteristic of the hybrid operational environment, and to identify practical ways and tools to improve the comprehensive and integrated approach, as the main way to counteract the effects of hybrid threats.

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The interdisciplinary analysis was one based on logical arguments, thus trying to highlight the essence of the processes within the hybrid conflict, to present possible effects and thus to draw relevant conclusions in order to achieve effective concepts of civilian and military integration.

### **WHY A COMPREHENSIVE-INTEGRATED APPROACH?**

The broad spectrum of hybrid actions and conflicts requires national and international entities/institutions, competent and coordinated responses as well as military and civilian capabilities capable of conducting coherent and effective actions in particularly complex missions - limiting the effects of hybrid threats.

The characteristic of the classical comprehensive approach (so to speak) is that it starts from a preliminary study or a preliminary understanding of a mission, of an organization as a whole, and then moves on to the study of the role played by each party/entity in the organization and dynamics of the whole mechanism - an atomistic, static, causal, goal-oriented approach (NATO Standardization Office, 2018, I-2; United Nations, 2013, 3).

Instead, in our view, it is not enough to analyze the role of the parties (in our situation the instruments of civilian and military power, national and international, governmental and non-governmental) and what they could achieve in order to accomplish the ultimate goal; we need *full and coherent integration* of the effects of the actions of all these instruments of power, a *comprehensive and integrated approach* – dynamic, complex, quantum.

Moreover, by integrating the actions of various civil and military instruments from all environments of manifestation of hybrid conflicts, based on principles, mechanisms, norms, etc., *indirect, cumulative or cascading effects* can be achieved, which would make the mission more effective, would reduce the costs and the time necessary to achieve the ultimate goal.

Also, regarding the action of *comprehensive integration* of all instruments of military and civilian power, it is useful to have a clearer delimitation of it, by defining the concepts/notions with which it operates. Thus, “*comprehensive*” means something “*that includes much (broad), that has a rich content*” (Dexonline, 2021), and “*to integrate*” implies “*to include (itself), to integrate (itself), to (incorporate) (itself), to harmonize (itself) into a whole*” (Dexonline, 2021).

In this context, an important and necessary aspect is the *integration, full harmonization* of joint *military operations*, actions (from all environments: land, air, sea, cyber, space) of other components/*civilian and military government* institutions, national and international, as well as the effects of the actions of non-governmental organizations and/or other pressure groups.

Consequently, the result would lead to a *comprehensive and integrated approach*, which involves harmonized operations and activities with coherent effects, conducted efficiently and carried out on the basis of mutual commitments, mutual trust and common goals. This approach combines in a unitary way all the elements of the civilian and military system, intra and inter-state and from all the areas of manifestation of the hybrid confrontation.

This *comprehensive integration* must be understood as a living organism. Similar to the parts of an organism (nose, lungs, heart, etc.) that are very different but together contribute significantly, in a unitary/integrated manner to support the life of the organism (vital goal), components of a campaign to combat hybrid threats (civil and military, governmental and non-governmental, national and international) through a *comprehensive integration* must pursue the common/vital goal. These tools, forces and capabilities are not just simple elements/ components, but they must be “organs” with a well-defined role in a “living and healthy entity”. There are different elements, but each contributes with something specific and vital, something (forces, effects, resources, etc.) that could not be brought by any other component.

A *comprehensive and integrated approach* must be a way of resolving issues of great importance, not only for local communities affected by (hybrid) conflicts but also for government structures, and successful collaboration within the inter-institutional and international community can make a substantial contribution to promoting common values and interests (Rațiu 2020, 90).

## ASPECTS REGARDING THE MECHANISMS OF A COMPREHENSIVE-INTEGRATED APPROACH

Given the fact that future campaigns/operations will focus on “*the integrated application of all instruments of power, both military and non-military, in order to create the planned effects. Forces and capabilities must be able to address a method of politically, militarily, civilly, economically and scientifically coordinated and concerted action between governmental and non-governmental organizations*” (Romanian Ministry of Defense 2007, 24), we need an integrated perspective that regulates the concept of building, training and employing the targeted capabilities for participation in the full range of operations, including in the hybrid context.

The strategies and methods used in comprehensive integration can be multiple and different, but the real challenge for entities involved in hybrid conflict management is to *properly calculate the effects of the mix of approaches* to be used throughout the confrontation (strategy), estimating the timing of implementation of appropriate tools, capabilities, methods, equipment (time), but also the extent to which they are applied (intensity).

Thus, given the complexity of the approach, in our opinion, it is necessary a *strategy* (integrative document), built on a scientific basis, able to generate the implementation of new systems of norms, procedures and standards derived from the holistic-dynamic conception of approaching actions.

The proposed *comprehensive capability integration strategy* must address all structures involved in the security process in the context of hybrid threats.

In this sense, the *Comprehensive Capability Integration Strategy* would have the following attributes:

- Establishing the principles governing the status and role of each instrument of power;
- Defining the situations and conditions in which these tools will be used;
- Highlighting the integrated organizational structures, necessary for management of capabilities and coordination of effects;
- Directing the development of an integrated capabilities plan;
- Regulating in a unitary conception the process of generating capabilities, the constitution of the groups of forces, the planning of the actions, the succession of the employment of the instruments (capabilities), the command and the control;
- Directing the preparation/training of capabilities (integrated training) intended to participate in integrated actions before any hybrid threat arises.

*The comprehensive capability integration strategy* offers the possibility and opportunity to develop other follow-up documents that strengthen trust between institutions, promote the communication of lessons learned, encourage the development of common procedures and also create the framework for training and of integrated exercises. All this will facilitate a better planning of campaigns/operations and their implementation/application at a higher level.

### **Knowing the operational environment – an imperative of the comprehensive capability integration Strategy**

Given the existence of *threats, aggressions and hybrid operations*, the following question arises: where are they carried out? Therefore, the environment in which they manifest is characterized by a wide range of components: actors, physical space (land, air, sea, cosmic) of actions, intelligence, technology, cultural environment, risk factors, threats, etc., practically, a mix of elements, and their combination/crossing leads to a *volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous* context (VUCA- Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) – a *hybrid operational environment*.

Consequently, the hybrid operational environment is “the framework for the manifestation of hybrid threats, involving the complex and combined configuration of the multitude of actors, means, actions and effects that converge in a concerted” (Rațiu 2017, 265), and often in a secret way, to meet certain interests/purposes.

An essential part of the *comprehensive capability integration Strategy* must be the identification of sources of insecurity through a thorough understanding of the hybrid operational environment. Insecurity is the result of the interaction of a wide range of factors, so it is important to use a comprehensive and integrated approach to the context and operational environment, based on a multicriteria and multilateral analysis.

The analysis must focus, without limitation, on directions such as:

- the actors involved (to which reference has been made) the civilian population with its culture, ethnic or marginalized social groups, religion, natural resources, imposed limits and borders, political, economic, social issues, etc.;
- the basis, the causes, the circumstances of the conflict and their implications on the resolution approach;
- conflict history, geo-strategic position, physical environment, climate, geography, infrastructure, etc.

Thus, a first effective tool for a better understanding of the hybrid operational environment – the actors, conditions and circumstances that influence the employment of power tools/capabilities – *JIPOE – Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment* (US Joint Chiefs of Staff 2014, I-1). This tool provides a holistic understanding of the hybrid operational environment. It supports decision-makers so that they know better how factors in the operational environment influence and shape the choices of the actors involved (opponents' capabilities and intentions, for example) and how they act to accomplish goals and achieve the desired end state.

If the civilian population is the "*center of gravity*" of the hybrid conflicts around which all actors, forces, capabilities, actions and effects revolve, the process of *intelligence Preparation of Battlefield* (IPB), well known in the military, *is not sufficient anymore*; we need "a more precise understanding of the operational environment, including aspects of local communities, an in-depth knowledge of what people mean, their social and cultural structures, how they think, act and/or react to certain internal and external stimuli" (Rațiu 2016, 112).

In this hybrid operational environment, *the support and protection of the civilian population is in fact the mission* of the integrated, governmental forces. "*Confrontation will be won by influencing the population and not by destroying the opponent*" (Headquarters International Security Assistance Force Kabul Afghanistan, 2009, 1). A careful analysis of civilian considerations is essential for long-term success.

For a more complete analysis of the action context within the hybrid confrontations, the characteristics of the civilian population /"human terrain" and its culture in the operational area must also be taken into account.

That is why it is necessary to apply a new integrative tool, that of *Civil Preparation of the Battlespace*, which would include several distinct stages (Marine Corps Civil-Military Operations School 2019, 23):

1. Defining the civil environment in which it operates;
2. Analysis of the civilian operational environment (human terrain);
3. Development of the model of the civilian operational environment;
4. Determining the actions of the civilian population in the analyzed area.

Consequently, it can be stated that by raising awareness of the importance of human terrain and by using such methodologies/tools, a close relationship with the civilian component (population and civil actors in the operational environment) is achieved and maintained, facilitating cooperation, harmonization of activities, exchange of information, integrated planning and management of campaigns/missions to counteract the effects of hybrid conflicts.

### **Ways to alleviate the friction between military and non-military instruments**

Military structures and civilian actors have traditionally perceived their roles as distinctly separate and different. For example, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are reluctant to act alongside military forces, even if they come from the same country or from the country receiving

assistance. Aware of the need to maintain neutrality and protection, they often felt threatened by being associated with the military. On the other hand, military leaders tended to view civilian organizations, especially NGOs, as undisciplined, and their operations incoherent, inefficient.

Over time, after the experience gained in the last theaters of operations, the attitude of both sides began to change. Civilian personnel often seek protection, logistical, medical or evacuation support from the military. NGOs have earned the respect of the military and government structures for initiative, speed in mobilizing resources, ingenuity, and the military instrument has imposed itself through vision, judicious action planning, special logistical capacity, etc.

However, many shortcomings in coordinating the actions of these elements still persist. Therefore, the *comprehensive capability integration Strategy* must focus on interagency/interinstitutional actions which, through a holistic capability analysis, comprehensive planning and integrated implementation, will lead to the neutralization, limitation or elimination of the effects of multidimensional actions of opponent groups.

Moreover, in the process of proposing ways, solutions, ideas *to promote and make the comprehensive integration more efficient*, there were identified the following essential aspects:

- *areas where there are differences in approaching* participants in integrated actions (defining the final status, setting initial objectives, planning and decision, developing plans, conceptual elements, action principles, communication, intelligence cooperation, standard cooperation procedures in different situations);

- a set of fundamental ideas, theses and norms – *principles* (ex: knowledge of the cultural context, priority of capability employment, unity of effort, integration of command, mutual knowledge, concentration of efforts in support of civilians, adaptability, regular determination of actions, communication and mutual information, etc.), which should represent standards, important landmarks in the conceptual realization of *comprehensive integration*.

Consequently, in order to comprehensively integrate all actions and capabilities required by a hybrid context, the commander/head of mission must have a full perspective of the campaign/mission, in order to identify the mechanisms by which relations between available forces, military and civilian, national and international can be improved. Also, if possible, it should make a prospective assessment of all actors (independent, unknown, etc.) operating in the region and their actions, the aim being to *focus and synchronize efforts* for maximum effect.

## CONCLUSIONS

The military forces have not been for a longtime the power that holds the monopoly over security, but they are/act as one of the other tools available to politics. In the future, wars, hybrid warfare or crisis management missions will be much more complex and multidimensional, therefore, a holistic/integrated approach of all these is considered to be successful, involving *political, military, diplomatic, informational, civil* and *economical* tools from various actors: *states, governmental* and *non-governmental organizations*.

Regardless of the typology of actors involved in crisis dynamics, military structures, governmental, nongovernmental organizations or media agencies, they all have specific objectives and interests in conflict areas/theatres of operations. These objectives will lead to different policies and actions, which often contradict each other.

An essential feature of the comprehensive, “classical” approach during different types of warfare/operations is that we can start from a preliminary study or a preparatory understanding of the mission (final purpose of the mission), of the organization as a whole, and then we can move on to the study of the role that each part plays in the organization and dynamics of the whole system.

However, it is *not enough* to analyse the role of the parties (in our situation the instruments of civil and military power, national and international, governmental and non-governmental) and what they could accomplish in order to achieve the ultimate goal, but it is necessary the complete and coherent integration of the effects of the actions of all these instruments of power, a *comprehensively integrated approach*.

*The comprehensive integration* is a process by which the capabilities of a joint task force together with those of other national and international organizations and agencies are combined to achieve coherent effects.

The consequence is a *comprehensive and integrated approach*, which involves joint operations commanded and deployed through mutual understanding, trust and common goal—a fundamental objective of any Force.

This approach combines in a unitary way all the elements of the civil and military system, intra and intergovernmental/inter-state, and also the typology of the approach, the effect and the network.

It can also be emphasized the need for a culture of *integration* and coordination of civilian and military instruments, ensuring a functional synergy of all mechanisms and structures, regardless of interests and subordinations.

A culture of *integration* plays the role of an ideology meant to eliminate the conceptual and action barriers between vectors of the two domains. Civilian and military instruments can develop into/become coherent capabilities when the culture of coordination creates a task force mobility, which could ultimately lead to a blurring of civilian and military differences. Such a strategy is necessary both at the level of execution, but especially at the level of conception.

Therefore, the *comprehensive and integrated approach* (multilateral and interdepartmental) of the issue of power instruments in hybrid warfare or crisis management, continues to reveal number of challenges, which analysts, theorists and decision makers/policy makers must take into account: the presence of planning and command parallel structures, lack of experienced and authoritative specialists, different or even antagonistic organizational cultures, as well as different funding mechanisms for civilian and military instruments.

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