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THE SUBSTANCE OF THE NAVAL OPERATIONAL ART

ABSTRACT

The World Navies activities manuals contain the prescriptions of so called major naval operations. The development of military warfare as well as naval warfare is a process of elaboration of principles, kinds and ways of use (new) forces and combat-means in the real historical environment. They are collected as tactics as well as operational art. Meanwhile the codification of them must be verified, because the way of conducting naval operations in closed theatres changed. The paper presents selected aspects connected with operational problems in the contemporary political environment.

Keywords:

operational art, operation, naval operations.

INTRODUCTION

...aggressive innovation, experimentation, and education are fundamental to meeting the challenges of an uncertain future¹.

A naval operation remained a main kind of naval combat activities. The change of situation of belligerents on the maritime theatre is taking place in a wide area, which causes the necessity of many tactical activities so that the sum of achieved tactical goals makes possible to achieve an operational object.

The Polish Navy activities manual contains the prescription of six major naval operations. Namely amphibious operations, anti-amphibious operations, naval defensive

¹ Clark V., *SEA Power 21: Operational Concepts for a New Era*, Naval War College while Current Strategy Forum, www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/cno/speeches/clark-csf02.txt, p. 8.

operations, naval offensive operations, maritime interception operations and evacuation operations². This publication contains a systematization of knowledge regarding background of the classical naval operations called also major naval operations which should be known in order to accomplish missions in the most effective and efficient way possible with an acceptable level of risk.

THE PLACE OF OPERATIONAL ART IN NAVAL WARFARE

As a part of naval warfare the naval operational art refers to theoretical and practical preparation as well as conducting of naval operations and systematic combat activities (SCA), which have been carried out by naval operational and tactical forces. The subject of examination and studies of naval operational art is naval operations and systematic combat activities as well as joint activities of naval forces with other branches of armed forces.

The history of a naval operation as a kind of combat activities, which has a quite bigger framework than a battle, reaches the beginning of the XX century. It was a result of quantitative and qualitative development of naval combat means.

The development of warfare as well as the development of naval operational art is a process of preparation of elaboration of principles, kinds and ways of use (new) forces and combat-means in the real historical environment. During World War One were developed operations of cutting sea lines of communications as well as amphibious operations. That war showed that a strategic goal cannot be achieved by single combat, which was possible in previous century by carrying out a gun battle. (So called 'general battle')³.

That became a role, that a single combat does not exert a crucial influence on a change of situation neither only on the maritime theatre of combat nor on its single part. An important change of situation of both belligerents on the maritime theatre of combat could be since that time achieved only by destruction of opponent main task force, which was very often dispersed in a wide area. This caused, that many battles were needed in order to achieve success on the operational level. On the other hand a single tactical combat could bring a success only at tactical level (tactical goal). This way a combat became a part of an operation or it was carried out as a part of systematic combat activities on the maritime theatre of combat.

² *Regulamin działań Marynarki Wojennej RP*, Catalogue number: Mar.Woj. 1266/2003, pp. 40–41.

³ J. Zieliński, *Zarys teorii sztuki operacyjnej wojsk lądowych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2000, p. 13.

The experiences of sea wars bring many evidences that the success of maritime combat activities depends especially on the development of operational art. It causes, that a right determination of its contents and missions has a crucial importance for combat activities at sea. The main tasks of naval operational art are:

- examination of character of recent maritime operations as well as the determination of preconditions for its success;
- working out of effective manners for use forces during maritime operations and systematic combat activities;
- drawing up of effective forms for co-operation of different branches of naval forces and their co-operation with other services of armed forces during common activities in naval operations;
- working out of effective methods for commanding of forces use modern means;
- drawing up of principles for versatile assistance during naval operations;
- working out of determination of operational possibilities as well as standards of use versatile naval forces during naval operations and systematic combat activities;
- drawing up of operational justifications for directions of development as well as requirements for future naval forces and means;
- improvement of methods for planning of naval operations use recent research methods and computer techniques.

THE SUBSTANCE AND AIMS OF MODERN NAVAL OPERATIONS

The maritime combat activities include:

- all combat activities of maritime forces as well as dispensed forces of other services of armed forces;
- all activities other than war (including peace operations, humanitarian aid or crisis management operations, which have a military character).

The combat activities of maritime forces during a war include a broad variety of combat activities such as reconnaissance activities, surface activities, under surface activities, activities towards coast as well as activities in the air over the sea theatre. They include:

- carrying out reconnaissance in the operational area of interest;
- destroying of enemy naval forces;
- destroying of enemy amphibious forces at sea;

- defence of own sea lines of communication;
- defence of own base system;
- laying of mines;
- support of the army during its activities along the coast.

Depending on their goal, mission and the end state as well as on their scale the combat activities of maritime forces can take place as:

- maritime operations;
- systematic combat activities.

A maritime operation is the main form of maritime combat activities at the operational level. It is the entirety of battles, combats, blows and attacks related to each other regarding their aim, time and place and carried out in the separate area of the maritime theatre by separate organised maritime task forces. They can be conducted as single operations or in co-operation with other services according to a common intent and plan in order to accomplish the most important operational and tactic-operational missions⁴.

An operation will be carried out, when such missions should be accomplished in a relatively short period of time. The supreme headquarters will order an operation taking into consideration goals, tasks as well as the situation on the theatre.

The time needed for carrying out a maritime operation depends on the character of task, on the forces and means taking part in combat activities as well as the distance from the own bases to the area of combat activities and also on physical and psychological abilities of combat teams and forces.

In contrast to maritime operation systematic combat activities are the entirety of combat and supporting activities, which were related to each other regarding their aim, time and place and carried out in the separate area of the maritime theatre by many maritime task forces and conducted in order to achieve an operational goal in a relatively long period of time. The main character of systematic combat activities is the use of forces usually with normal or sometimes higher intensity within a longer period of time. The character of such activities can be defensive as well as offensive one. It can be many combat activities on tactical level and carried out by many separate and limited forces.

Maritime operations have some specific conditions regarding their preparation and execution and also have some limitations.

⁴ M. Zieliński, *Sztuka operacyjna*, part I, *Operacje morskie*, AMW, Gdynia 2007, p. 17.

The most important conditions of maritime operations are:

- the extensity of sea areas;
- the variety of sea environment, where the maritime operations are conducted (the surface of the sea, the deep water as well as the airspace over it);
- the depth of the sea and the shape of its bottom;
- the meteorological and hydrological preconditions;
- the shape and the character of the coastline;
- the possibilities of effecting on the enemy;
- the organisation of the combat support.

The most important limitations on conducting maritime operations are:

- the influence of the meteorological and hydrological preconditions on the accomplishment of tasks and on possibilities of weapons usage;
- the limited possibility of covering surface force activities.

This entirety of problems needs taking into consideration special solutions, which make possible to centralise the command as well as to assure the freedom and high tempo of action and the possibility of gathering the initiative. Regarding multinational joint operations the next necessity in order to be successful is the standardisation of weapons and means as well as the use of similar procedures.

The following kinds of maritime operations can be distinguished:

1. Naval offensive operations — which means active counter action carried out by maritime and air forces in order to destroy or to crush enemy naval forces and achieve sea supremacy.
2. Naval defensive operations — which means an action carried out by maritime forces in co-operation with air forces in the defence zone of maritime forces in order to keep sea supremacy and to hold favourable operational regime for conducting other maritime operations as well as for conducting systematic combat activities.
3. Anti-Amphibious operations — which means an action carried out jointly by maritime, land and air forces in order to crush enemy amphibious forces during movement to the amphibious objective area (AOA) as well as in the AOA.
4. Amphibious operations — which means an action carried out jointly by maritime, land and air forces in order to transfer amphibious forces to the AOA as well as organisation and support of them in order to bring them on the coast at the right time and in the right place.

5. **Evacuation operations** — which means an action carried out by maritime forces in co-operation with air forces in order to transport threaten forces or (and) goods under enemy counter action circumstances.
6. **Maritime interception operations** — which means an action carried out by maritime forces in co-operation with air forces to keep the sea supremacy in order to deny enemy forces access to or leaving an area, harbour or theatre.

Every maritime operation will be carried out in order to achieve an operational or strategic goal. The goal of an operation means the end state, which should be achieved, when the operation ends successful. The goal of an operation will be achieved by conducting some tasks. A task is such a result, which should be achieved by forces in order to achieve a goal. The task and the goal are connected with each other and the task depends on the a goal. The task of a higher level command is usually the goal of a lower level command.

The strategic goal of an operation means achieving of such results, which cause in a consequence such change in strategic situation on the theatre of war, which has a crucial importance for the whole military activities or for the whole war.

Strategic goals of an operation can be:

- destroying of state economical and military potential;
- blowing off or softening of missile attacks carried out by enemy naval forces on own coastal objectives and military forces;
- denying access from the sea to their own territory.

The operational goals of an operation are mainly parts of strategic goals. The operational goal assumes achieving such results, which cause a change in operational situation on the one part of the theatre.

The operational situation assumes such situation of belligerents on one part of the theatre, which has crucial importance on activities, which are carried out there. The sign of a favourable operational situation is the possession of sea supremacy in this part of theatre.

Operational goals of operation can be:

- to foil the enemy naval task forces to hit own task forces;
- to foil the enemy amphibious task forces to conduct an operational amphibious operation;
- to cut opposite sea lines of communication, which are important for supplying of coastal` front.

Operational goals can be achieved also by carrying out systematic combat activities, which happens by accomplishing many tactical tasks. However it needs quite longer time period, than for an operation.

Apart from maritime operations the navy can carry out activities, which have operational importance as a part of defensive or offensive operations conducted along the coast by the army. The following activities can be distinguished: amphibious landings, which have tactical importance, defending enemy tactical landings, making difficult the enemy to hold his sea lines of communication, protecting own sea lines of communication in order to make possible to transfer own land forces.

The goals of modern naval operations can be achieved first of all by carrying out active offensive actions, which aim is to destroy the following: the enemy main concentration at sea and in bases, as well as destroying important objectives on his territory, and his transport means on his sea lines of communication and in harbours. It means also to capture important regions on the coast and on islands.

In spite of the fact, that some kinds of operations have defensive goals (e.g. defending of sea lines of communication, anti-amphibious activities), we should keep in mind, that in order to achieve them, we have to be offensive.

Keeping in mind the participating forces, we can distinguish the following kinds of operations:

Independent ones

- naval defensive operations (NDO's);
- operations of making difficult the enemy to hold his sea lines of communication (cutting them);
- operations of protecting own sea lines of communication;
- naval offensive operations (NOO's).

Joint ones

- amphibious operations;
- anti-amphibious operations;
- maritime interception operations (MIO's);
- evacuation operations.

THE CHARACTER OF MODERN NAVAL OPERATIONS

Modern naval operations have the following features:

- determination in specification of goals of an operation — it results from uncompromising approach of belligerents as well as high possibility of catching and keeping the initiative during combat activities;
- big space momentum of operation and conducting missions far away from own bases;

- high activity and dynamic of action — it results from aspiration of belligerents to take the initiative and to hit faster as well as to apply the newest armament and also from high readiness and agility of forces;
- possibility to carry out missions in quite different environments or space;
- participation of different flotillas, task forces, as well as units from other services requires joining of different weapon systems and building of special command system;
- mass use of forces and means — it results from (bigger and bigger) defence of attack objects and getting bigger (shorter and shorter) time for carrying out a mission getting shorterer;
- wide use of means of electronic warfare - it results from material base of modern war;
- difficulties of organisation of all kinds of combat and logistic support as well as command structure - it results from big space momentum of operation, from carrying out varied tasks in different environment by use of electronic warfare;
- factor time is becoming more and more important;
- carrying out combat service (especially during crisis) can have crucial influence on beginning of combat activities and making preconditions to be successful in further actions.

There are many preconditions crucial for success in an operation:

- keeping high readiness of forces (standing high readiness means the possibility to start carrying out a mission with organised forces and fulfill it at the right time;
- concentration of main effort in order to destroy enemy main objects and concentrations of forces;
- wide manoeuvre with forces, means and attacks during an operation;
- standing carrying out reconnaissance;
- catching and keeping of sea supremacy in the region of operation at least for the time of conducting the main combat mission;
- carrying out supporting missions at the right time;
- efficient defence of forces against attacks from airspace;
- accurate organisation of command system, co-operation as well as combat and logistic support;
- assurance of continuity of effort during an operation (deployment of force concentrations, fast regeneration of readiness, standing increase of combat effort and introduction of reserve at right time;
- achieving of surprise during action.

Operational surprise means action of own forces unexpected by enemy, which results in the fact, that the enemy is not able to counteract effectively and has to act under inconvenient for him circumstances. Operational surprise can be achieved by:

- covert and beforehand conducted preparation of operation;
- covering of the intent of the operation;
- covert deployment of forces as well as choosing a surprising for the enemy moment of beginning of combat action;
- acting of forces on the main direction in different forms from simultaneous hits, which can result in impossibility of organisation of defence by the enemy to impossibility to redeploy his forces;
- applying of unexpected by the enemy ways and methods of action;
- use of new combat means during the operation;
- wide applying of methods of disinformation.

The aim of supporting activities is to create preconditions, which are favourable for accomplishing the mission on the main direction. This will be achieved by conducting attacks (as well as other kinds of influence) against this concentrations of enemy forces, which can disturb own action on the main direction of operation.

Usually the objects for supporting activities will be appointed in accordance to composition and character of own forces, which act on the main direction of operation. For example if tasks on the main direction of operation will be carried out by submarines, than objects of supporting activities should be enemy antisubmarine units. If the main effort should bring planes, we have to take enemy anti air units as objects of supporting activities. Supporting activities should above all anticipate own acting on the main direction of operation.

The aim of supporting activities should not only be destroying for appointed objects. Usually we should pursue a goal to cut enemy action, which can disturb own activities. It could be achieved by interception or by making enemy forces concentrations weaker as well as by isolation of his forces in order to denial them to come into battle space against own forces, which are acting on the main direction.

The forces, which were appointed for carrying out a operation and which were deployed to initial areas are called operational force concentration.

An operational force concentration includes:

- concentration of forces, which main destination is to act on the main direction of operation;
- concentration of forces, which main destination is supporting activities;
- concentration of forces, which main destination is to act as a reserve, as well as to be used to spread success, which was achieved during operation.

By conducting an operation the composition of force concentrations can change. Some of them can be strengthened, while the others can be made weaker, because their importance for combat at a given moment became lower. Strengthening of forces can be achieved as a result of introducing to action whole reserves or parts of them. The operational force concentration should, if possible, include structured naval force concentrations. Its structure can not be changed if possible. The same tactic-operational or tactical force concentrations can be included in acting on the main direction of operation as well as for supporting activities.

THE SUBSTANCE, CONTENTS, CHARACTER AND AIMS OF NAVAL SYSTEMATIC COMBAT ACTIVITIES

Intensive qualitative and quantitative changes, which are taking place in combat forces and means resulted in the need to prepare new forms and ways of use of naval forces. These changes caused, that achieving goals of combat at sea became no more possible by winning a single battle or even operation. This is why we distinguish apart from an operation the second form of operational use of forces namely systematic combat activities⁵.

Systematic combat activities (SCA) mean the variety of activities carried out by maritime combat forces as well as supporting activities, which were conducted by naval forces during a long period of time use uniform plan schedule and intent in order to achieve an operational goal. The main issue of systematic combat activities is — contrary to an operation — use of forces usually with normal or sometimes higher intensity within a longer period of time. The character of such activities can be defensive as well as offensive one. There are many combat activities on tactical level and carried out by many separated and limited forces.

The aim of systematic combat activities is to achieve and keep favourable operational regime in defence zone or in controlled area of interest in order to make possible to conduct an operation as well as to show the readiness of forces to defend controlled sea regions. Such activities will be conducted in peace time (operational activity) as well as in military crisis and in war. During a military crisis situation or during war systematic combat activities have combat and supporting character.

⁵ M. Wiatr, *Między strategią a taktyką*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2000, p. 236.

Systematic combat activities include:

- antishubmarine warfare as well as combating forces and means of diversion;
- laying of mines;
- searching for mines and combating them;
- combating of enemy sea lines of communication;
- screening and defending of own sea lines of communication.

Supporting activities during SCA include:

- conducting reconnaissance;
- covering and electronic warfare;
- organisation of all kinds of defence;
- special support of SCA (e.g. rescue support and hydrographical support).

As mentioned, the most important content of systematic combat activities is standing influence (within weeks or months) on enemy forces and facilities in the whole theatre of combat activities, in order to fulfill the naval tasks as well as in order to intercept his action on the whole theatre and to put him to losses (keeping the sea supremacy) at given operational period.

The term operational period means the time between following maritime operations or the time period, which is stated by season changes of weather conditions.

The main goals of systematic combat activities can be:

if own side possess sea supremacy

- systematic, planned making enemy forces weaker in order to keep sea supremacy;
- fulfilling of whole assemblage of naval tasks and keeping favourable operational regime in naval defence zone;

under inconvenient conditions of operational area

- possibly biggest impairment of enemy naval forces, disorganisation and delay of his action;
- assurance of favourable operational regime in separate area on territorial waters if possible.

The term operational regime means the entirety of activities and measures on the maritime theatre of action, which will be undertaken in order to bring such circumstances, which mean:

- keeping high readiness of forces;
- save system of bases;
- detection of enemy at right time and notification own forces about this fact;
- isolation of enemy forces or making his action difficult.

During war a favourable operational regime will be achieved when sea supremacy will be achieved and kept. At peace time a favourable operational regime will be achieved when sea favourable circumstances will be achieved in order to conduct reconnaissance missions, observation, as well as to enable own forces to conduct training and basing.

The goals of systematic combat activities will be achieved through long lasted activities carried out by small forces, which will have to carry out missions on a small scale (defensive and offensive) as well as supporting measures.

The whole collection of missions of the navy during war includes⁶:

- screening and defending of own maritime areas;
- screening and defending of own external sea lines of communication;
- fight against enemy sea lines of communication;
- backing of own land forces on coastal lines of operation.

The collection of systematic combat activities includes:

- antisubmarine warfare as well as combating forces and means of diversion;
- laying of mines;
- searching for mines and combating them;
- combating enemy convoys and vessels;
- screening and defending of convoys and vessels;
- supporting own land forces on the coastal line of operation.

The preparation of systematic combat activities includes:

- planning of naval systematic combat activities;
- organization of systematic combat activities;
- preparation of forces for action;
- preparation of area for action.

The planning of naval systematic combat activities includes:

- preparation and making decision about systematic combat activities (working out an intent and tasks for forces);
- working out planning documents for organisation of systematic combat activities.

The foundation for making of decision is the mission, which is done by got the commander in chief of the navy for a given operational period as well as the estimating

⁶ A. Makowski, *Sily morskie współczesnego państwa*, Wydawnictwo „Implus Plus Consulting”, Gdynia 2000, p. 236.

of the situation on the maritime theatre of action. After receiving the mission the commander in chief of the navy makes analyses, estimates the situation, takes into consideration the time factors and makes the intent for systematic combat activities. Commanders intent is the most important part of decision and it makes visible how to achieve the goal. A mission shows what needs to be done and the intent shows how to do that.

The intent for conducting of systematic combat activities shows⁷:

- aim and period of naval systematic combat activities;
- main tasks and principal way of conducting them (options);
- composition of forces and means, which were assigned to carry out the tasks;
- support measures as well as the composition of forces and means assigned for their conducting;
- operational formation for conducting systematic combat activities (includes main forces, supporting forces and reserve).

The commander in chief of the navy's intent of systematic combat activities is the basis for planning and organisation of naval systematic combat activities. After making estimations and calculations a plan of systematic combat activities will be prepared, which includes the following documents⁸:

- main operational part on a chart with an index legend
 - deductions from analysis of situation,
 - tasks of neighbours and borderlines,
 - intent for conducting of systematic combat activities,
 - cooperation, communication and command;
- plans for carrying out particular tasks;
- plans for use of branches of naval forces;
- plan for interaction, covering and command;
- plan for operational support and logistic support;
- operational plans for preparing of theatre of combat action.

⁷ More about this issue see: *Regulamin walki Marynarki Wojennej Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej*, Catalogue number: Mar.Woj. 585/72. See also: *Regulamin walki Marynarki Wojennej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (związek taktyczny, oddział, okręt)*, Gdynia 1991.

⁸ *Sztuka operacyjna Marynarki Wojennej*, part II, *Operacje morskie i działania sił Marynarki Wojennej w operacjach Wojsk Lądowych na kierunku nadmorskim*, WSMW, Gdynia 1983. See also: R. Miecznikowski, *Sztuka operacyjna Marynarki Wojennej*, part III, *Operacje wspólne*, WSMW, Gdynia 1986.

The tasks for conducting of systematic combat activities will be stated in directive or in operational order. For a tactical unit the tasks will be given in a combat order or in an arrangement and for a logistic unit in a logistic order or in a logistic arrangement.

The command of forces outside the naval defence zone is done the commander in chief of the navy but inside of coastal defence flotilla response area by the commander in chief of the coastal defence flotilla.

To make the command efficient an important role play duty services, which are collecting and working out data about situation on the maritime theatre of action and which are also giving orders regarding instructions. During naval systematic combat activities the headquarters are receiving all kinds of information about the situation on the maritime theatre of action. The working out of information will be easier by use of automatic command systems. The communication system should make possible to communicate between tactical units, ships, planes as well as headquarters and units from other services. The continuity of command will be achieved by use of double means as well as defending them against disturbances caused by enemy.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

Operational art occupies an intermediate and indispensable position between policy and strategy on one hand, and tactics on the other. It serves both as a bridge and as an interface between these areas of study and practice. The strategic and operational objectives can not be accomplished by tactics alone. Tactical perspective is too narrow and strategic perspective too broad, to ensure the most effective use of military and non-military sources of state power in the accomplishment of strategic objectives.

The principal role of operational art is to sequence and synchronize or, simply to ‘orchestrate’⁹ the employment of military forces and non-military sources of power to accomplish strategic and operational objectives in a given theatre of action. Strategy is not concerned with actual fighting, but operational art and tactics are.

The results of tactical actions are useful only when linked together as a part of the larger design framed, by strategy and orchestrated by operational art. Technological advances, numerical superiority, or brilliant tactical performance alone is insufficient to achieve an ultimate success in a war. A sound and coherent strategy and operational excellence were the true keys to winning wars in the past and will remain so for the

⁹ M. Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare. Theory and Practice*, Norfolk 2008.

foreseeable future. Yet, for all its well-documented and proven importance in winning wars decisively and with the least loss of resources and time, too many military theoreticians and practitioners have neglected or even worse, disregarded operational art. A lot of emphasis is given to technology and tactics (and to a lesser degree, strategy), but operational art is the key piece spanning these two.

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ISTOTA SZTUKI OPERACYJNEJ SIŁ MORSKICH

STRESZCZENIE

Regulaminy działań sił morskich zawierają opisy tzw. podstawowych operacji morskich. Rozwój sztuki wojennej, w tym sztuki wojennej sił morskich, jest procesem wypracowania zasad, metod i sposobów użycia sił (również ich nowych rodzajów) oraz środków walki w danym środowisku historycznym. Zebrane są one w postaci taktyki oraz sztuki operacyjnej. Ze względu na użycie sił morskich na ograniczonych teatrach działań pojęcia te powinny być weryfikowane. Artykuł prezentuje wybrane aspekty związane z problemami operacyjnymi we współczesnych uwarunkowaniach politycznych.

Słowa kluczowe:

sztuka operacyjna, operacja, operacje morskie.

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