THE ASSIMILATION OF CHANGE AS AN INDICATOR OF INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS' MANAGEMENT FLEXIBILITY

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Abstract

In the current security environment described by the acronym VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) the military leaders should take on social roles. Motivating and empowering the subordinates has to exceed the level of goal, while developing skills to take fast, flexible decisions under risk and uncertainty is the prerogative of modern military leader, whose main task is to apply a management and leadership style to ensure the integration of change the in military organization culture, especially for the command of troops involved in international missions.

Introduction

Change is a phenomenon affecting all walks of social life, including the military. Major changes mark the transfer from one type of social order to another, from one social system to another. Transformation in the field of decision-making is fundamental to ensure its achievement in other fields of interest or activity. At the same time, decision-making transformation is a

condition without which change in other areas would be difficult, chaotic, and even impossible.

In our opinion, the achievements in Romania's Armed Forces are but the beginning of its continuation for it poses the political and military decision-makers with the international overall picture, including the specificity of the NATO missions and their implications. We would like to point out that our emphasis on the importance of military decision transformation is sustained by our strong belief that an efficient decision-making process is the condition of successful transformation in general, particularly when transformation is accompanied by transition, when mentality change depends primarily on the decision-makers.

The main factor affecting the current environment's transformation from an economic, political, social, military or cultural point of view is globalization, with everything it implies at the level of organizational structure and leadership tools, namely: delayering, teamwork, subordinates' empowerment, delegation and technology influence – all of which being used to build agile and flexible organizations, able to function under the new circumstances.

Efficient management is a condition of organizational existence in general and of the military organization's existence in particular, for the latter is, after all, a special type of organization.

We consider it useful to state that decision-making is a leadership tool and duty at every organizational level. From an organizational perspective, a decision-maker's act has direct consequences at least upon one other individual's decisions and actions.

In the current political-military context, one cannot speak about decision-making without considering terms such as command and control interoperability, technology transfer, defense industries cooperation and0or migration. NATO standards should not be applied only in tangible fields such as finance and material resources, but rather in unquantifiable areas of human

resources, which are more difficult to manage, especially in building interpersonal relations that enhance communication and teamwork.

In an attempt to provide a comprehensive and realistic picture of the present stage of the Romanian military reform, one must identify and examine the factors that hamper the Euro-Atlantic integration, among which an important role is played by previous difficulties encountered in: procurement, procedures, linguistic barriers etc. Internal hardships – limited budget, political incoherence or system inertia – accompanied by external difficulties cannot be overcome unless available resources are well managed and performance criteria are applied at decisional levels.

Theoretical approaches to change

Since I strongly believe that a phenomenon needs first be understood theoretically before being put in practice, I suggest briefly discussing a range of change theories whose purpose is to delineate the set of terms and concepts associated to change.

Change in general is determined by "the growth of technology and the speed of innovations in all walks of life" (Cook 1995) as well as "organizational de-layering, self-managed teams, business process re-engineering and IT home-based working – all driving the creation of leaner, more flexible organizations in a globalized environment" (Teare and Monk 2002).

As far as change classification is concerned, Roffe (1999) identifies three categories: incremental change, which progresses unnoticeably but leads to significant transformations, discontinuous, which does not follow a familiar pattern but rather uses exploration methods, and radical, which involves profound alterations. As one may notice, this classification is based on an inner perspective, which emphasizes on the organization and its internal processes.

On the other hand, Kitchen and Daly (2002) view the organizational change process as being highly determined by the business environment, which consists of "factors such as consumer demand, government legislation or the general state of the economy". Furthermore, they distinguish between "continuous change", which assumes "gradual shifts" in the elements mentioned above, and "discontinuous change", which is "far more dramatic, the sort of thing that alters completely the business landscape, the nature of whole industries and economies". As a typical example of "discontinuous change", Kitchen and Daly (2002) mention "the transformation of former Eastern European bloc countries to Western style democratic capitalism in the 1990s".

As a consequence of the perceptions and classifications of change previously mentioned, management literature has focused on the impact of change upon leadership and management behaviour as "leadership is a critical success tactic in managing change and organisational well-being" (Kelemen 1995), whereas "change management requires an understanding of the business climate as well as the organisation's own internal dynamics" (Kitchen and Daly 2002).

Usefulness of embedding change in organizational culture and leadership

Bechtel and Squires (2001) suggest a holistic approach consisting of "Six Dimensions of Change", namely:
  (1) addressing people issues
  (2) the vision and 'running the business'
  (3) leadership development
  (4) communications
  (5) individual and team development

(6) culture.

Although these aspects appear to be addressed separately, one can easily notice that each and all of them are linked to the organization's human resources. This is not surprising considering that "most of us, when faced with change at work, are naturally concerned about 'self' and the impact the change will have on us personally – our job security, the ability to pay our bills, and also about what it may mean for our careers within an organization" (Bechtel and Squires 2001).

Starting from the assumption that leadership is what makes the organization go round, we may conclude that the aforementioned approach offers an appropriate understanding of the duties which the organization's leaders should do in order to facilitate change within their organizations.

In spite of the fact that this framework has been developed in relation with a civilian organization, I argue that it is equally relevant to the current state of the Romanian military organization. The rationale underpinning this idea is the ever increasing role that the military leaders should play, in my opinion, in the progress and modernization of the military affairs in their widest sense. Apart from continuing to perform their traditional, that is, combat and belligerent roles, the military leaders should assume social roles, too. I am referring here to the real leadership duties such as subordinates' motivation, empowerment and appraisal, whose main purpose is to give them a sense of respect and importance within the organizational context.

Under the current circumstances of the VUCA (*volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity*) environment, the military leader is the one who should learn and be able to display visionary and decision-making skills, for he/she is the one who leads his/her people in death and life situations. Unless the urge for change is acknowledged and credited, it is impossible to imagine a cohesive and motivated team, whose members are willing to embark on the new missions with enthusiasm and determination.

Conclusions

One of the most significant Romanian decision-makers' achievements is our country's accession in the NATO and EU, although this is but the first step towards Romania's real integration in the Euro-Atlantic bodies. Given the permanent changes occurred in the economic, strategic, military and political arena, Romanian decision-makers face constant ad growing challenges that impose the need to achieve interoperability, compatibility, commonality, and interchangeability. What is important, from my point of view, is that NATO standards should not be applied only to the tangible field of financial and material resources – visible and easy to quantify – but also to the intangible, unquantifiable, and more difficult to manage field of the human resources, paying particular attention to building interpersonal relationships that enhance communication and team spirit. Notwithstanding that, at the first glance, this "humanization" of the traditionally hierarchical military relations may jeopardize the discipline and strictness of the act of command, the lessons learned have demonstrated that the synergy generated by the institutional/institutionalized relations and the interpersonal relations significantly increases the success of any action, including the military missions. Given the complexity and interdependence of these responsibilities, today's leaders can no longer afford to make decisions intuitively and empirically; instead, they have to have professional and personal skills to help them make optimal and quick decisions under uncertainty conditions. Also, military leaders must assume social roles and prove subtle and unquantifiable traits such as cultural competence, communication skills and flexibility. Otherwise, the future of international missions remains questionable, and the troops' morale and performance low. In this respect, lessons learned play an essential part in

assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of previously made decisions, and help decision-makers take appropriate future decisions.

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