MULTINATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Neno Hristov Hristov

Associate Professor, Ph.D., Dr.Sc., Military Academy, Sofia, Bulgaria

Abstract

Modern leadership theory describes the environment to which the military organizations of NATO countries have to adapt and integrate in order to cope with new challenges. Configuration of the modern society, or how it becomes a certainty, how it influence the acts of the armed forces, the way in which society reflects on the military leadership are from strategic importance for dealing with future dimensions of security and stability. Transforming the military leadership we have to build a military that can adapt to the modern way of thinking, which would develop the ability quickly and efficiently to adapt to modern challenges in diverse situations and circumstances.

Keywords: leadership, military leadership, military organizations, peacekeeping, multinational operations

MAIN TEXT

War and security are not isolated phenomenon. The same is true for conflict prevention, crisis resolution and peacekeeping. They are considered in the socio-political context and influence of military professionalism and military leadership. Modern leadership theory describes the environment to which the military organizations of NATO countries have to adapt and integrate in order to cope with new challenges. Configuration of the modern society, or how it becomes a certainty, how it influence the acts of the armed forces, the way in which society reflects on the military leadership, are from strategic importance for dealing with future dimensions of security and stability.

Emerging new security environment meets the modern soldier with increasingly international, a diverse pattern, characterized by complex, interrelated security challenges, i.e. challenges that can be successfully addressed only when they reach a level of flexibility and adequate strategic thinking at all stages of military leadership that exists and at the level of civil-military relations.

Dexter Fletcher, in his publication "*Cognitive Readiness: Preparing for the Unexpected*", says that in this new environment "officer must be adapted to work with professionals with other military officials, irregular armed forces and civilian local population" and "he must make quick decisions that have strategic implications and in almost all cases do not have possibility for consultation and coordination of his decision with a higher

military command". The need for ethical, cognitive readiness extends equally on the soldiers, sergeant and officers (2004).

Transforming the military leadership, we have to build a military that can adapt to the modern way of thinking, which would develop the ability quickly and efficiently to adapt to modern challenges in diverse situations and circumstances. USAF Transformation Plan states „Army of the future will need soldiers who not only handle high-tech armor, but can deal with different people and cultures who are tolerant to uncertain (unknown) situation, take initiative, and ask questions, even to the power".

When talking about the art of war Carl von Clausewitz states that the military leadership requires more creative mind than systematic knowledge that must therefore make sense of war as an art rather than science. Therefore, the theory must be more contemplation, meditation, rather than doctrinal knowledge, it should enrich leader, giving rise to power in him. Further, Clausewitz explains that the theory becomes more complicated when it touches moral values. The foundation of his theory is an idea that when it comes to human life and responsibility for someone else's life, we cannot predict and control human behavior. When we have to deal with the unpredictability of human behavior in situations of armed conflict – "the chaos of war" - everyone should have the "ability to judge", which is a combination of intuition and intellect.

How to judge in current multinational operations? How to judge when you have different understanding of the processes, and different cultural frame of thinking? How to judge when you have to fulfill your national interests? This dilemma makes difficulties to the leadership and stands current military participating in multinational operations.

The leadership of multinational operations in the past and in the present days meets a number of factors that limit their success or lead them to failure. Some of the factors which undermined and caused difficulties are cultural differences and peculiarities of the multinational environment. These difficulties are caused by inability to harmonize cultural differences between nationalities in the military units themselves but also between the formations and the local population in the area of operation. Very often, these units are mixture of the national elements and national units with diverse national and organizational cultures with different concepts, strategies and doctrines, military structures and administrative cultures, with different levels of education and training with various processes of decision-making and various technological levels of equipment and facilities. These differences affect the effective interaction and collaboration in multinational operations. For military organizations is becoming more difficult and imperative to craft how leadership, officers, noncommissioned and soldiers to deal with cultural diversity in multinational operations and missions.

Cultural factors were always important, both in international relations and in military operations. Working in a multicultural environment is important for the leadership to have the same understanding of the term culture. According to Webster dictionary, culture is "a common pattern of human behavior and its products, such as thought, speech and actions dependent on human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge and experience across generations, using the resources systems of language and abstract thinking". The culture is a combination of beliefs, technology, norms, values and language shared by a group of people or nation as it sets in on the action method, the way that they treat others, they think and interpret events happening around them. Often people from different cultures tend to build false stereotypes and prejudice, valuing other cultures by their standards. Lack of knowledge or unwillingness to learn other cultures leads to conflicts or misunderstandings. The only way to avoid this is to be aware of cultural differences and lead to their origin.

All those cultural differences affected the operational effectiveness of multinational formations. Described factors can be considered as organizational and cultural barriers to the operational effectiveness and adaptability of soldiers to work in multinational and multicultural environment. All this is largely related to the level of training of military leaders, their teams and their unique cultural adaptability (2006).

In a research carried out in the Bulgarian Army with the term „cultural adaptation" we mean „capabilities of man to understand and recognize not only their own (and those of people around them) prejudices and stereotypes based on cultural differences but also to adapt themselves to these as necessary, and to ensure maximum efficiency objectives and tasks of the team".

To be effective in contemporary and future operations, leaders announce to be military professionals in the traditional sense, but also be able to interact with many civilian actors operating in the area of operation and to perform tasks that traditionally are not considered as military. Moreover, military leaders should develop a strong joint coalition culture as future operations will be mainly multinational, joint and with the participation of many civil structures. At the same time, any authors stand that this can lead to crisis and role tensions in the professional military identity (2004b).

Last, but not least, it should be given serious consideration to the likely pressures on the formation of cultural identity and the role of national and cultural identity in the process. This process is associated with serious challenges, because it flows in an institution recently accepted as a pillar of national identity. Military organization will increasingly lose its purely national character and become part of a large multinational and multicultural organization. Increasingly the multinational coalitions will require leaders to build coalition identity as a set of cultures of its constituent nations. In turn, rolls of the national cultural identity will remain in the background.

All these cultural and organizational challenges initiate serious discussion and research within the NATO. In the two discussions on "Improving the organizational efficiency of coalition operations in the NATO School in Oberammergau Germany in 2008 and in the Strategic Command of Transformation, Norfolk, USA in 2009, the participating experts identified four groups of factors affecting on the efficiency of multinational coalitions (2007).

The first group includes factors related to organizational structure, such as relationships and hierarchical relationships between different organizational units constructed channels for information exchange, a system for allocating resources and other.

The second group contains factors related to management processes in the organization, such as decision-making and allocation of responsibilities within the organization, establishing clear and consistent understanding of the aims, objectives and procedures, common understanding and shared responsibility, exchange of information between coalition partners and others.

The third group contains factors related to people in the organization. Examples here may indicate the selection and development of staff cohesion, motivation, training, periods of rotation, satisfaction from participation in the mission, leadership skills and more.

The fourth group includes factors related to organizational culture, norms, values, ability to communicate in a multicultural environment, trust between the coalition partners and others.

The first two groups can be defined as organizational barriers, while the last group is related to cultural adaptability. The third group of factors, people in the organization includes organizational and cultural barriers. Of course, this division is arbitrary because often the organizational and cultural barriers between them are connected.

Based on my personal experience and expertise from NATO studies I will seek to expose the most important cultural barriers faced by Bulgarian and other military participating in multinational operations.

Among the most important cultural barriers, continue to be the insufficient knowledge of English by the military for whom it is not native. This leads to difficulty in communication, the military to whom that language is native began to perceive its partners, as incompetent, show doubt in the sense of partnership and coalition partners' reliability.

Another important barrier to the effectiveness of multinational operations is connected with the culture of decision-making. For nations such as Bulgaria there is a typical centralized type of decision-making, while other nations are characterized by a decentralized method of decision-making, which provides greater powers to leaders from lower management levels. This difference in cultural decision-making process has a direct influence on the culture of avoiding a decision making because of mistakes fear. Nations which are typical to learn from their mistakes cannot understand those who are afraid of make wrong decision.

Another important barrier is time. There is a difference in the time examined, as a parameter for tasks. Researchers determined that based on cultural characteristics; there are two concepts of time, consistent and concurrent. In cultures in which time is viewed as a sequence of passing events, people just do the same thing at time or period and stick to the deadline for implementation of planned actions and plans developed. In cultures, where time is perceived as a unity of past, present, and future peoples are doing more things at the same time.

Last, but not least I can set and different attitudes toward women soldiers. Different cultures have put in different place women in society and many nations are difficult to perceive their roles and abilities during the operation.

These cultural differences do not cover the whole spectrum of possible barriers that may face the leaders. Of course, these barriers create difficulties which may create tension during operations. Therefore, they require careful analysis and target training not only for leaders but for their teams. The problem is not the existence of cultural differences, something very typical of multinational environment and the lack of sufficient military

capabilities to realize and understand their own (and those around tech) preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices based on cultural differences.

Besides unique cultural barriers, modern leaders may face and so-called organizational barriers to which I will try to stop very briefly.

As organizational barriers we can mention:

- The different periods of rotation of the national elements;

- Lack of system for lessons learned;

- Different systems of training and lack of standardization in this respect;

- Selection and appointment of suitable people;

- Lack of good communication at various organizational levels and lack of positive attitude among themselves to exchange military information;

- Different national objectives and national restrictions on the use of contingents.

What are the recommendations that can be given to leaders to improve the efficiency of their work in multinational operations?

The most common recommendation is associated with the preparation for conducting the operation. Experience in NATO shows that teams must be assembled before leaving on a mission. It is necessary to develop a common doctrine and standards of training for participation in multinational operations.

Secondly, it is necessary to pay attention to the process of hand over and takeover of positions as leaders must build a reliable system for collecting lessons learned.

The third group of recommendations is related to political and military aspects of multinational operations. It is necessary to prevent dominance by any nation during the operation, i.e. give preferences multinational model, not the model with a leading nation. This approach allows building coalition identity and perception for NATO operation, not perception for operation in interest of one nation.

The fourth group of recommendations is related to the establishment and development of cultural adaptability in working in a multinational environment. In this group of recommendations a special place is given to building leadership skills for managing diverse in racial, ethnic and cultural relations teams.

Military leaders at the strategic level have many responsibilities, but their responsibilities are increasing twice when they are talking leadership in a multinational environment. Multinational and multicultural environment require high training not only in professional, purely military terms, but higher general culture and softness in relations with peoples. To strike the balance between military factors and cultural awareness will be the biggest challenge to current and future education of military leaders. Military theory will never be as powerful as human and social factors. Without cultural awareness military leaders will never be able to substitute for creativeness, morale, cohesion, as well as personal leadership commitment and responsibility.

REFERENCE LIST

Fletcher, Dexter, (2004a) „*Cognitive Readiness: Preparing for the Unexpected*" Helsinki, Finnish National Defense College, 2004

Paul Klein, Karl W. Haltiner (2006), *Multinationality as a Challenge for Armed Forces, in Professor Manas Chatterji* (ed.) **Military Missions and their Implications Reconsidered: The Aftermath of September 11th (Contributions to Conflict Management, Peace Economics and Development, Volume 2)**, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.403-414

Salas, E., Burke, C. S., Wilson-Donnelly, K. A. Fowlkes, J. E., (2004b). *Promoting effective leadership within multicultural teams: An event-based approach. In D. Day*, S. J. Zaccaro, & S. M. Halpin (Eds.), *Leader development for transforming organizations* (pp. 293-323). Mahwah, NJ: LEA

Picciano, N. (2007). *Cross-cultural challenges in peace operations: Notes on bi-national and multinational examples.* Academic Research Branch Research Note, *No.4*, 1-13.

Hristova, A. *Chuzhdoezikovoto obuchenie kato chast ot protsesa za formirane na kulturna kompetentnost u voennite spetsialisti.* – Voenen zhurnal, 2014, № 3.

Hristova, *A. Kulturni tsennosti i mezhdukulturni vzaimootnoshenia na rabotnoto myasto – protsesi na razvitie.* – Savremenni predizvikatelstva pred sigurnostta i otbranata. Parva chast, Bulgarian National Defense College 2016.

Markov, Z., A. Hristova. „*Izgrazhdane na komunikativna kompetentnost za rabota v mnogonatsionalna i multikulturna sreda.* – Voenen zhurnal, 2016, № 2