

**THE VIABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF MODERN MODELS OF LEADERSHIP
IN THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION. FORMATIVE IMPLICATIONS***Benoni SFÂRLOG¹**Ghiță BÂRSAN²**Dănuț MOȘTEANU³**Daniel-Sorin CONSTANTIN⁴*

ABSTRACT

The effective exercise of leadership in the military organization is essentially conditioned by the interpretative horizon regarding the process of leadership particularized for different situational contexts. Thus, the defining actional states, the specificity of the military actions and the level of structural reference induce the need to adapt certain relevant criteria of analysis meant to generate the flexibility of the pertinent options. Both the recent theoretical models and the ones adapted to the level of the Euro-Atlantic structures or to that of the Romanian army have differentiated degrees of applicability and efficacy. Besides the implications of a doctrinal nature, formative reconsiderations and in terms of the curricula as well as certain aspects of a structural nature become necessary.

KEYWORDS: *leadership model, military leadership, military organization*

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1. ASPECTS OF A CONTEXTUAL NATURE

The analysis from a historiographic perspective of the evolution of people and of social organizations, from tribes to nations, reveals that, from their beginnings, the needs specific to their functioning in different space-temporalities have been satisfied by "gathering, hunting, and using force to grab them from other socio-organizations; when the aggressed socio-organizations defend themselves, they defend their resources and reserves of products, and confrontations take place". In other words, the functioning of social organizations including the contemporary society that is in full globalization, has been and will be characterized by the random sequence of two limit- states, namely the state of peace and the state of war. The relativity of the border between the two states of the social processuality is underlined by the great Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu, who said: "Peace is nothing but a useless word unless it is built on the only foundation that can sustain a lasting peace and this name is security". In this context, the people's concern towards finding appropriate solutions to effectively counter any threats to the state of security of the nations has become permanent. The awareness of this social need has shaped the social premises for the establishment and the functioning of the military organization since peace time, its functionality being demonstrated especially during the states of war.

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Initially characterized by aggression and armed violence, nowadays the war states involve more subtle ways of aggression, of an economic, informational nature, etc., which, at a superficial assessment, seem to exceed the military domain.

In order to accomplish its constitutive mission, the modern military organization carries out two fundamental activities - generating/ regenerating the force and the use of force - according to the actional aspects specific to the conditions of peace, and of crisis or war, respectively. To develop the structural capabilities and to valorize the operational capacities, the differentiation of the defining aspects of the processes that maintain and support the functionality of the military organization, especially of the leadership exercised at all the structural levels, in peace or war, becomes necessary and useful for optimization, for adequacy and effectiveness.

The obvious trends in the sphere of contemporary armed confrontations, especially after the attacks on the symbols of the American world and the start of the war on terror, mark the transition from the conduct of the third wave warfare, which employs the newest and the most sophisticated weapons systems, categories of technique and types of fighters. Moreover, the perspectives and the trends that can be identified at the beginning of the 21st century, include, unequivocally, the rapid transition to the fourth generation of warfare, which extends confrontation beyond the traditional limits and, located in the sphere of conflict of low intensity, it will induce major consequences in all the spheres of social life. The nature and the special physiognomy of conflicts, differentiated from the "conventional" that characterized much of the history of the last century, require the updating of theories and rethinking of the doctrinal and operational solutions.

The successful conduct of the actions specific to the low intensity conflict requires attack in depth and simultaneous attack, the rapid and precise intervention of reduced structures with an increased degree of mobility, which are highly technicalized, specialized in surgical strikes in order to achieve effects of operational and strategic level. Today, the argument that small size military structures, such as the Special Forces, are the most suitable for carrying out this type of actions is widely accepted. They are able to valorize the physical force and the cohesion of the subunit, as well as motivation, intelligence, confidence, emotional commitment and individual initiative.

For any military structure, the combat power emerges from the capitalization of its potential by exercising leadership, in immediate effects that lead to the achievement of the desired goal, at the same time, annulling or reducing the possibilities of the enemy to do the same. The leadership ensures the purpose, the direction and the motivation of the structure. The leadership integrates all the other elements of the combat power (maneuver, firepower, protection and intelligence) and transforms the entire existing potential in real combat power. The leadership, in its classical sense of process of influencing people to accomplish a certain mission is considered crucial, as it is the most dynamic of the components of the combat power. If leadership is essential, then the investigation of the modalities to exercise it both at the level of the military organization in general and at the level of its structures and the identification of the possibilities to intervene for the optimization of the activity of generating the force or during the conduct of the operations become necessary and opportune. This requires rigorous theoretical foundation through analysis of the conditionings and of the variables involved in the leadership process at tactical level.

2. PRELIMINARIES REGARDING THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ISSUE

The problematics circumscribed to leadership, in general, is amply and systematically investigated by important and prestigious scientific research institutions worldwide, in the last two decades, the outline of competitive explanatory theories and models based on the latest cognitive and interpretative acquisitions in the field of managerial, socio-human and behavioral sciences were recorded. Their applicability and effectiveness in the military organization in different situational contexts is the prerogative of the specialized military infrastructure. Clearly, well founded studies with an undeniable applicative finality have been made, but, most often, these are confidential and

do not enter the scientific circulation or they become public when they are already obsolete. The analysis of the classic or modern models of leadership in terms of their viability for the military organization (Popa, M., 2012) shows the constant preoccupation for effectiveness, for performance as well as limits caused by the interpretative horizon, the reductionist manner, and the scientific unilaterality of the models.

Our preoccupation to meet the functional needs of the organization has acquired concreteness by assuming a program of conceiving (designing) and implementing a model of leadership adequate to the described problematic context, applicable and effective in the tactical level military structures. Preceded by a stage aimed at investigating the issues relevant from an operational point of view, the complexity of the integrated and expanded battlefield, the present study fits in the second stage aimed at identifying the modalities by means of which the leadership at tactical level develops capabilities and enhances the combat power of the military structures. *The Viability and Effectiveness of Modern Models of Leadership in the Military Organization. Formative Implications* is a step towards shaping leadership according to the operational requirements and which is designed to provide support for setting up a program of forming and developing leaders, as well as doctrinal solutions. It responds to the assumed objective of identifying the defining and specificity elements of effective leadership exercised in operation and of capturing the problematic situations and the factors that generate leadership failure at tactical level.

3. METHODOLOGICAL OPTIONS

Preliminarily, based on the empirical expertise and on advanced documentation, we agreed upon the plausibility of the following working hypotheses:

- (a) Effective leadership has certain characteristics and differences both in terms of the level (tactical, operational or strategic) and in terms of actional stance operated (peace or war conditions);
- (b) The modern models of leadership are, in context, partially applicable and necessarily perfectible;
- (c) The realities of the battlefield determine conceptual reconsiderations regarding the forming of the leader and the training of the force;

The study has qualities specific to the exploratory and explanatory demarches. In order to achieve the assumed objectives and to test the hypotheses, we used the qualitative research methodology applied to a representative population, hierarchical structured that includes only participants in missions in the theaters of operations. The subjects are experienced militaries, knowledgeable in the field of leadership theory and practice.

The undertaken research demarche did not pursue the statistical representativeness or the generalization of the findings to a population, but the identification of a pattern/model of action. Thus, the representativeness occurs in relation to the purpose of the research (exploratory type) and the generalizations were made at theoretical level, enriching the content or specifying the sphere of the basic concepts, contributing to a deeper understanding of the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, behaviors of the investigated persons.

After collecting the data (obtained by means of the interview, the questionnaire-based survey and of the study case), there resulted certain information, transcripts, recordings and texts. The content analysis of these was carried out with the help of specialized software, which enabled the organization and the structuring of the materials on the addressed themes, their conversion into quantitative expressions by coding, then the counting and the comparison of the results, the frequency and the tendency being relevant criteria for the research purpose. The categorical grids that were obtained enabled afterwards the outline of conceptual maps, their thematic analysis and the drawing of conclusions.

4.1 Contextual differentiation of leadership

When taking principles into consideration, there should not be any assumed differences between exercising leadership during peacetime and under war conditions. In order to explain any differences or their absence, one starts from the saying "We train as we fight." Its implementation is the only solution for a successful leadership. The creation of technical automatisms, as well as of those related to organizational and interpersonal relations, both for followers and for the leader, can only be done by means of the most real simulation, during peacetime, of the difficult and complex conditions that appear in a combat situation.

A nuance specific to actual combat situations is that leadership must be more firm, but at the same time, more gentle. The harsh environmental conditions determine the leader to decrease the pressure on subordinates, in order to protect them from further wear, but only when the group has sufficient experience to enable it to work with little information or sometimes with no information or guidance from the leader. This is what happens at tactical level. For the operational and strategic level, in some situations, the leader can push the group he/she controls more, because the wear in their case is mostly of an intellectual nature and sometimes it is of a psychological one (depending on the degree of safety they have in the location where they are).

Implicitly, the situation changes dramatically during wartime, when the exogenous factors can decisively modify the conditions of action of a certain subunit. In a dangerous, unpredictable, environment uncertainties put pressure on leaders and subordinates, people fear for the safety of their lives and efficiency may drop. The role of leaders is very important to maintain an atmosphere of balance, a positive but realistic spirit within the subunit. They need to focus more on action, helping subordinates to remain motivated for the established objectives and for the accomplishment of missions. Experienced leaders do not get discouraged during operations. Many of them manage to reorganize and reposition their resources, resources of any nature, which does not happen in times of peace, when things sometimes carry on due to inertia. Thus, in the circumstances that appear in the theaters of operations, the rapid and courageous leadership initiatives bring significant benefits for the accomplishment of the missions. So, at tactical level, the long-term plans are not always useful or possible, planning can be reconsidered, mainly aiming at immediate results. The challenge for a successful leader is to manage dysfunctions with moderate optimism, which enables him/her to fulfill the mission under the new conditions. The personal involvement, the face-to-face interaction, the personal example, empathy and the management of the individual and collective resilience are defining characteristics of the leader integrated in the operation of the platoon or company.

At higher levels (operative and strategic), the quality of the communication, both horizontally and vertically, the assuming of the vision, the unity of conception, the team spirit, cohesion and the promotion of the participatory style are crucial for leadership effectiveness

4.2. The practical relevance of the concepts defining leadership models

Equally, traits, behavior and leadership style are indicators that can determine the success or the failure of a subunit for the accomplishment of a mission

There is a close relationship between the traits of a leader and the exercise of leadership. The traits responsible for the success of the leader vary from one leadership situation to another. Despite some common characteristics, different groups and different activities of the group require different types of leader with the specific traits. Associating with people based on physical characteristics or on the manner in which they satisfy our needs (primarily those at the top of Maslow's pyramid, but in the case of the military organization, under conditions of war, the basic ones too - security, shelter, food) are very important and will establish sympathies or antipathies between subordinates and leader.

The most important traits of a leader are not those of "robot" able to do anything to win, but those that are related to his/her human and emotional side. From the point of view of the importance and sustainability over time, the important factors for a leader-subordinate relationship that is successful and effective for the mission are the leader's charisma, certain behaviors of his/hers, and especially his/her style of leadership. Charisma can be a catalyst only for a short period of time. Similarly, certain behaviors of the leader can act as accelerator or as brake in the process of constructing the group relationship, but, most importantly, enhancing the resources of the group and the positive attitude of the subordinates depends on the leader's focusing on people and on how this is put into practice by the leader and on how it is perceived by the subordinates. Especially in critical situations, where survival itself is questioned, the need of the people to feel important and protected is very high. And one of the few ways in which this is possible is by means of the leader and by how he/she imposes or infiltrates the esprit de corps, in its purest form and at the highest level within the group. These issues must be induced within the group regardless of the environment where this is, because the psychological group processes last very long and are crystallized only "at special temperatures and conditions" so that the moment the crisis appears, they must have already been formed.

The effective military leadership is based on emotional intelligence (effective leaders are empathetic and have the capacity to "read" people, their needs and desires) on adequate contextualization (what functioned in a specific situation may not be the optimal solution for another context), on the ability to influence, to guide and to support, and not on control, ethics, respect, collaboration.

The leader and his actions are essential. "Lead by example!" Each individual tends to function according to the principle of the minimal effort, even in difficult situations tending to adopt the easy and wrong solutions rather than the hard but correct ones. Consequently, subordinates need to see that the hard but correct decision is also the possible; they need to see a person who also puts it in practice, not only preaches it. Therefore, the leader is one who is morally obligated to demonstrate by personal example that everything that seems difficult or sometimes impossible can be put into practice. He/she must inspire his/her subordinates, provide vision to the group and capitalize on its resources, knowing in detail all its members.

The situation (context) and, in particular, the concrete tactical situation are an inclusive, integrative factor for leadership.

The manner in which stress, constraints and uncertainty act on the psyche of the military that are in combat situations depends on the manner in which they are trained, from a psychical point of view, of course, until they have to confront the respective situation. The psychical training is done both exclusively mentally, through self-guided or guided imagination exercises, by means of which the military can imagine himself/herself in various critical situations, in order to try to determine his/her mode of reaction, as well as by putting himself/herself in similar practical situations in which he/she is exposed to the same disturbances as in a real mission. Like any other quality/aptitudes, resistance to stress factors must be trained and this is possible only through the simulation or creation of situations that put soldiers in difficulty. The easiest way to do this is by intense and/or prolonged exercise. It is free, it does good to the physical and mental health of the military and it brings to light all the weaknesses and defects of character of a person.

The effective leader must know the people under his/her subordination. Either directly, as cause-effect, or as effects of the 2nd or 3rd degree, the actions of each member of the group influence not only the results of the mission, but the chances of survival of other members too. The members of the group are aware of this and thus, trust is gained with more difficulty than in other environments. The leader will earn the trust of the group with even more difficulty because of the power of he/she has and thus of the very big influence that a simple order can have on the physical safety of the group members. Hence the pressure on the shoulders of the leader is very high and the margin of error is very small; mistakes can rarely be corrected. The greatest fear of the military in combat is to remain isolated, to lose the protection and the respect of others. The military leader manages the

stress of combat at the level of the subunit led mainly by the adopted leading style. Stress, uncertainties and risks affect the exercised leadership style very little, if the leader has those qualities that allow him/her to adapt, adjust and defend against stress factors and the abilities to ensure resilience by influencing hardiness.

The stable character that inspires confidence and reliability and the ability to work with the big picture (multiple-layer thinking) are the main things that a leader should have. These imply experience and continuous integrated training. The leader must not forget that men need his guidance because he/she is responsible for steering the ship, while they have individual tasks, he/she must not forget that perfection does not exist and that there are no generally valid solutions, consequently, there are no pauses from thinking and seeking solutions to the problems that arise in a versatile environment such as the one encountered in the theaters of operations and not only. He/she must not forget that he/she is responsible for what the group does or does not do and that failure is part of the process and must not forget that in critical situations, the emotional cohesion, professionally strengthened is the most important. Results can be achieved on the basis of actional cohesion, but for a shorter operative duration and creating more discomfort in terms of the intensity and duration of exposure to the stress factors. Last but not least, he/she must not forget that life is the most important, but the risk of death must be assumed fully aware once the mission has begun.

4.3 Dysfunctions and deleterious (toxic) leadership in operation

Failure in leadership may be the result of obvious dysfunctions that are induced, mainly, by the lack of skills, lack of information, unstable motivation, events in the personal life and milieu and logistic issues. The effectiveness of leadership is also affected by the existence of unrealistic standards, an incomplete job description, inadequate training means, obsolete work procedures, physical and psychical wear, the inappropriate leadership style, situations of tension or conflict, the stress caused by the environment.

The varied cultural context of different countries can influence the understanding of the term "leadership", due to the different experiences in the use of the term in everyday language and by the personal experiences in the workplace of a person. In international missions, leaders are sometimes treated with indifference or, at best, patronizingly, this situation being changed or improved in some fortunate cases, by demonstrating high professional and human qualities.

5. CONCLUSIONS. FORMATIVE IMPLICATIONS

In the military organization, established leadership models, explained in classic or the newest variants, have applicability and relevance as far as they are adapted to concrete functionality necessities. Each of them is useful; they do not provide fully satisfying explanations and solutions that would capture the complexities in their entirety. It is obvious that the organizational levels, the contextual and structural factors as well as the social and cultural status parameters influence the effectiveness of leadership in its dynamics. Investigation, conceptualization and indiscriminate exercise of leadership are counterproductive, limit the interpretative horizon and obstruct the way to innovation and performance.

Anchored in the dynamics and specificity of the system, the functional military leadership aims at the organizational perspective, therefore, becoming, by definition, contextual leadership.

The NATO standards accept, in their construction, the American theories about leadership, which are the most developed. The explicit stratification of the military hierarchy in the current doctrine follows the same lines. In the FM 22-100 "Leadership" and FM 22-103 "Leadership and Command at Senior Levels" combat manual, it is well specified that the formulation and the development of the vision of the land forces, as well as the establishment and the coordination of the organizational change are, almost exclusively, the duty of the senior officers. Young leaders must focus their first

efforts on the execution of the orders and tasks received from superiors, and even to directly supervise them. The exercise of leadership based on values is a characteristic of this level, in other words, management and administration at high level, and leadership at low level. From this differentiation, there appear, implicitly, certain recognitions of the differences between leadership and managerial or administrative duties, but these differences are not yet recognized as fundamentally distinct types of functions, each requiring skills, training, supervisions and, perhaps, even different aptitudes, in order to fulfill the respective role well. Thus, the issue of the system of competences and defining capabilities for each separate level arises. The formative and doctrinal implications take shape. The perspective for the substantiation of a concrete solution that would meet the criteria of effectiveness and adequacy to the characteristics specific to the national military structures requires the development of the demarche aimed at the correlation of the variables and at the functional optimization at the level of the system.

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