

THE EFFECTS OF CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN MULTINATIONAL MILITARY MISSIONS

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Abstract: *The presence of multinational forces in conflict zones helps to strengthen the legitimacy of operations, sharing responsibilities, costs and risks. Co-operation within a multinational military mission in crisis or conflict situations should also take into account cultural differences and their effects. In the current multicultural military context, knowledge of cultural differences and cultural sensitivity is, in our view, the key to making cooperation more effective within the multinational military coalition. The question that arises is the following: "In a complex multicultural environment, what are the most important factors that, by interaction, can affect the effectiveness of the mission?" The culture of nations, multiculturalism, cultural factors, items that through the difference in manifestation and perception, produce major effects within the multinational mission, are the issues upon which special attention must be paid. Papers must be prefaced by an abstract in English up to 250 words. The text will be written in 10pt high, Italic, justified, left-right alignment. A number of maximum 8 keywords will be written 10pt below the abstract. The words will be 10pt high, Italic, left alignment, and separated by a semicolon.*

Keywords (max.5): *multiculturalism; multinational missions; cultural differences; crisis and conflict; theater of operations*

1. CULTURE AND ITS COMPONENTS IN THE MILITARY FIELD

Nowadays, the national armies' adversary is non-Western, transnational as an area of application, clandestine in approach, and operates outside the context of the nation-state. Its form of war, its organizational structure, and its motivations are determined by the society and the culture in which it originates. At the same time, the national armies are undergoing transformations, moving from massive armies to defending national territories against other states' armies, to smaller armed forces of professional forces engaged in global stabilization missions.

For more than a decade, military forces have been involved in wars where communities face, on behalf of their own values, a political legitimacy capable of justifying their own struggle.

The end of the Cold War generated a new paradigm in which national identity prevails. Situational uncertainty is a major cause of the decline in the efficiency of multinational missions, uncertainty that can be generated by both the lack

of knowledge of the battlefield and the cultural differences. Any process of situational interaction in theaters of operations has a multitude of unknowns that affect interoperability within the mission to varying degrees.

Cultural diversity can be seen as an obstacle, but it can also be an asset for the organization, as it stimulates different approaches from the perception and the different participants' experience in making decisions.

In multinational military operations, the effectiveness of the mission increases proportionally to the level of linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, harmonizing cultural differences, and the cultivation / strengthening of common cultural aspects of military subculture. Culture is a model of thought and behavior that helps the individual or group adapt to the environment in which they operate. At the societal level, culture helps to explain the differences between groups. Culture refers to everything that makes a particular environment unique. This includes: values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relationships, knowledge, experience, beliefs, etc.

Culture is an inheritance transmitted through specific communication codes such as gestures, words, writing, arts, media (press, radio, television), interactive media (the phone, the internet).

The popular "Iceberg Model" of culture, developed by R. Selfridge and S. Sokolik in 1975, completed by W.L. French and Cecil H. Bell, in 1979, identifies a visible surface consisting of behavior, clothing, symbols, artifacts, language and an invisible level of values, consisting of beliefs, norms, prejudices, common experiences, experiences and common dreams. When a group of people live together, even with relative isolation from the rest of the community, they have a specific place in society, common problems and perhaps a common enemy, and then the community develops a particular culture.

Translating the Iceberg model of culture into military subculture, we find the explicit, accessible aspects of common observation, easy to understand and interpret. It is the place where the behaviors, practices, military rules and traditions, the uniform, the rank, the greeting, the tone of the national anthem on ceremonies (change of order, honoring the heroes etc.), the flag of the unit, emblems, badges, etc. are rooted. Here we find aspects concerning active, retired and / or veterans. It is the strongest part of the military subculture in which we find beliefs, skills, value judgments (which affect how the "rest of the world" is seen), daily discipline, teamwork, sacrifice, and values in battle, loyalty. These are elements that any military knows, but whose formulation is made more difficult because they are related to the individual's spiritual level.

Cultures are dynamic systems that appear in a certain ecological context. People who share an ecological context tend to share the characteristics of the culture. The context includes the physical environment, the social and the political environment. When food sources are changed by climate change, successful cultures change their subsistence patterns to ensure survival. With the technological changes of the industrial revolution, the roles of rural and urban residents, land use patterns, time concepts and logical styles have changed. Cultures evolve or disappear due to context changes.

Finally, cultures are composed of integrated components. Balanced cultural elements help to achieve the survival, interaction and propagation objectives. If survival challenges depend on the cooperation of many people, individuals have an interdependence of self-concept, a network of

obligations, and behavioral patterns that strongly support group ties. Cultural values are important components of culture as they guide the behavior of individuals. The general idea in sociology about values is that they diminish the conflicts between individual and collective interests. They have a functional significance, favoring the joint work of individuals to achieve the desired common goals. When we talk about values, especially in the multinational military environment to which we refer, we take into consideration the following aspects: the general values held by the group in attention, how strong the belief in these values is the priority that the group / individual grants of these values compared to other groups.

Multicultural, trans-cultural, intercultural, are terms whose common root is "culture," a concept that emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century. Later, at the beginning of the 20th century, we witness the stage of cultural codification in which it becomes both a national and an ethnic symbol.

The multiculturalism and inter-culturalism concepts are often confused and / or used synonymously.

Subculture means a way of life, habits, ideas, behaviors of a group of people within society, a group that is perceived as being different from other members of society. A subculture proposes an ensemble of non-identical symbols, norms, values and modes of life with those of the dominant culture in a society, not in contradiction with them, but in addition to them.

Despite the fact that militaries from an alliance bring different national military traditions within the mission, the military profession has a common matrix. Military organizations are a specific occupational culture that is relatively isolated from society, yet included in it. Militants not only work in separate spaces and separate military bases, but sometimes they even live in these bases with their families. Multinational military operations include participants who have a variety of reasoning styles and who can interpret situations differently. A multinational force is not homogeneous from a cultural point of view. Moving from macro to micro level, we discover a variety of subcultures. These subcultures are differentiated at both structural and geographic levels. Structural subcultures appear to be at least two different types: horizontal, between services, and vertical, across different categories of staff, such as the classical vertical structure of officers or non-commissioned officers.

We consider Anthony King's contribution to the transformation of European armies at the end of the Cold War, the military trans-nationalism, interoperability and cultural aspects of the NATO mission, a contribution that presents a personal view of the evolution of the armies in the current political and economic context of a globalized world. The author captures the changes made by multinational military coalitions at the level of national military subcultures.

2. INFLUENCES OF MILITARY CULTURE IN MULTINATIONAL OPERATIONS

The "internationalization of military life" over the last twenty-five years has led to new organizational challenges. Collaboration of forces in different armies and weapons, information and communication requires not only technological interoperability but also adaptation to a multinational environment, with different languages, different styles of leadership, rotation systems, training, military traditions, hierarchy systems, etc. Thus, interaction within a complex socio-technical system in which the structure, processes, people and culture are aligned to achieve the goals that are essential for the successful and effective fulfillment of missions. The multinationalism of these coalition operations often hinders organizational effectiveness. For these operations to achieve and maintain organizational effectiveness at a high level of adaptation, flexible and mobile forces are needed. NATO fulfills this challenge through a process of transformation highlighting "reduction in size and availability", "increasing flexibility and mobility" and "multinational".

Cultural incidents occurring in theaters of operations appear rather rare, but when they occur, they are caused by misunderstandings and disagreements about culture and language. Language, in a multinational context, is an individual power tool for those who are English experts, as this knowledge allows them to dominate interaction and decision.

Communicating in a secondary language, even for fluent English speakers, can be an effort due to the rhythm of speech, technical terms and abbreviations. Communication problems can be exacerbated by the stress and lack of rest that often exist in theaters of operations.

The professional, organizational structure, contingent composition and their physical and moral status are of great importance in interrelation. Military culture all over the world has

adopted a hierarchical organization, so at first sight there should be no problems between contingents in terms of command and control, but the reality is different. There is a difference in the perception between the levels of training of professional military staff, the volunteer or the recruiting staff. This level may affect interoperability. The same problem exists between the reservists and the personnel of the active forces. The high level of technology has led to an increase in the number of reservists, specialists in certain areas. Advanced countries have already developed staff policies to reduce the friction between activists and reservists. Increasing the rhythm of operations, along with an acceleration of technological development, plus social, group and legal issues, require the presence of specialists in theaters.

Religious diversity increases operational capacity, international employability and social balance.

There are concerns about the poor representation of non-Christian religions in the army that is part of the multinational mission. The composition of the quotas also varies in terms of gender composition. Some nations restrict or even exclude the presence of women in the army (some Arab countries), while others allow women access to all departments, including participation in combat activities. The role of women in the various armies has increased much since 1980, offering the opportunity for additional jobs for women.

The inclusion of women in combat troops has attracted a possible risk that has put a great deal of attention from politicians and human resources managers. Another aspect of the "operational problem" is that of the influence of the societal culture and is represented by the reaction of the public opinion to the war and the human and material losses generated by it. It is an important aspect speculated in the information struggle. The fulfillment of the first objective (convincing its own population of the need for action to punish the guilty) seems to be quite easy for US administration's communication strategies, for example, because the shock and brutality of the attacks created an almost unanimous domestic consensus, perhaps for the first time throughout the US history. However, efforts have been intense, because it has been understood that the sustainability of support for the anti-terrorist campaign is dependent on the solidity of the construction of that support.

Knowledge of the language of communication and the stress generated by it. For non-native

speakers of English, even if the level of knowledge is very high, communication is a problem because they think in their mother tongue, the structure of which may be completely different from English. Speaking at a rapid pace, the use of acronyms, dialects and accents, can pose problems of understanding and interpretation even for native speakers. In intercultural conversations only about 50% of the volume of information is retained, while about 75% of the amount of information is retained during intra-cultural communication. This happens even if the level of knowledge of the language is expert level.

"Individualism - Collectivism" and communication, it is the most important dimension in the communication process.

Individualists tend to use direct, precise, clear messages that leave no room for interpretation. They do not perceive that there is a large psychological distance between them and other groups. They use direct confrontation when there is a problem that needs to be resolved. They focus on solving the task and not on establishing relationships when communicating. Thanks to clear, direct messages in multicultural communication, this is the category that generates direct friction.

In collectivist groups, the interest of the group prevails and there is a tendency for actions to be directed towards preserving the facade image of the group. In multinational groups in which there is a majority collectivist tendency, the members of the group who are discordant about the actions and beliefs of the group will be marginalized, the information will not circulate equally to that person and he/she will be given inappropriate tasks. Collective groups have the tendency to deliver inborn, ambiguous, context-sensitive messages. Loyalty to this type of group is expected to be total and assumed. In collectivist groups it is important that established relationships be cordial and lasting. The culture of work in Romania is a reflection of how society is organized and has its roots in recent history. In private companies, focus is on performance, teamwork being considered one of the most profitable ways to achieve goals. This is possible because there are adequate personnel policies, procedures and remuneration. In state-owned companies, the attitude of the employee is usually obedient, and determination in achieving the goals is minimal because of poor pay, lack of professionalism, and promotion of staff on principles other than merit. Due to the fact that in families, in general, parents were educated in the communist or post-communist period, they plant in

their own children the seed of individualism. Reality demonstrates that in an economy where the labor market is so narrow, where it is very difficult for the individual to get a job, it will be very hard to believe that he will not use the team to promote and/or to keep his job. Returning to the culture of work of the Romanian personnel within the observed organization, it should be mentioned that they are former active militaries, trained in a system that respects the rules, procedures and orders. Obedience is also a consequence of education and training. The dimensions of "distance to power" and "individualism" generate a typical behavior, with respect to superior degrees and lack of initiative. Tasks are fulfilled with conscientiousness, punctuality has never been a problem.

What must be highlighted is that Romanians who have seniority in international organizations have reached levels of knowledge of procedures and have a level of expertise comparable to any developed country of the world. Knowledge of procedures, rigorous planning, material motivation, teamwork, trust, leadership are key to adapting the Romanian culture of work to the culture of the multinational organization in the Resolute Support Mission Command. An important factor to be mentioned here is the relationship with the other Romanians in the field, on a professional line. It is recognized by all the participating nations that Romanians are very united and dependent on each other, regardless of the department in which they operate. Another fact appreciated by the staff of other nationalities is the high degree of professional expertise and level of linguistic knowledge of the Romanians.

3. CONCLUSIONS & ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Most basic human behaviors are common, irrespective of the culture the participant interacts with. Culture is an important factor not so much as to change the fundamental principles of war, military strategies or military profession. It is not a crucial factor for the fate of a war. Experience shows that cultural differences such as religion, language, habits, values, and cohabitation affect military operations. Often major cultural differences make it extremely difficult for groups to collaborate, but the establishment of joint procedures makes it possible for military collaboration on a professional basis.

Important elements in intercultural interaction are the level of general culture and communication skills. In order to be able to interact effectively

with another culture, the first condition is to get to know ourselves first and then to be open to knowing and accepting the values of other cultures.

In multinational military operations, the effectiveness of the mission increases proportionally to the level of linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, harmonizing cultural differences, and the cultivation / strengthening of common cultural aspects of military subculture. Leadership requires a deep knowledge and cultural expertise. With the growing importance of cultural knowledge at operational planning level, the option used in the past - part time cultural consultancy - can no longer meet the need for ongoing counseling needed for security and stability operations. Commanding at any level implies the existence of complex structures with specialized positions in providing cultural recommendations, which are an integral part of the planning, decision making and execution process. The ideal person for the position of cultural counselor is one who has a high degree of specialization, anthropology and/or sociology studies, a thorough knowledge of the environment acquired through direct, participatory observation. The overall conclusion is as follows: current and future conflicts will take the fight to another level. The armies will undergo major changes: the number of soldiers will decrease, the role of sophisticated technologies, the influence of the media and coalition armies will increase. Linguistic knowledge and cultural adaptability are just some of the keys to making international military cooperation more effective.

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