

## MILITARY UNITS RESILIENCE GROWTH ACTIVITY DESIGNS IN THE CURRENT OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract:** Resilience is particularly important for companies and organizations, but particularly for the military organization, in terms of protecting and maintaining the health of the organization's leaders and members as well as their ability to respond in a competent way to the inquiries of a given situation given shock, risk and uncertainty.

This article focuses on understanding the factors that influence military structures resilience and how to design specific activities to increase their resilience in military actions. Addressing the concept of military structures resilience is particularly useful for the defence policy and military culture because the concept can identify key elements needed by the military and military units to overcome difficult situations specific to international missions and current military conflicts.

**Keywords:** resilience, organizational resilience, influencing factors, intervention strategy, design, influencing process.

### 1. Introduction

Given that society, organizations (the military organization) face increasingly more crises and major risk, as military conflicts that threaten security and social stability, economic etc., social resilience depends on the organization resilience, of their members and actions. Special emphasis on the psycho-social field will be given by studying and deepening relationships that can be established between types of risks, threats and hazards, their occurrence frequency for various organizations and the principles which develop strategies, methods and tools to increase organizational resilience.

### 2. Theoretical-Methodological

#### Considerations

Resilience as generic skills was defined in the studies accomplished by the International Resilience Project, where the term has meaning of a universal capacity, which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimize or overcome the

destructive effects of adversity. “Resilience is the capacity to adapt successfully in the presence of risk and adversity”[1].

The characteristic of a person to be resilient is a component of mental health or psychosocial state of normality, while the studies on the resilience particularly focused on individual issues, namely the person. Over the past thirty years, several researchers have tried to capture the essence and characteristics of the phenomenon of psychological resilience by making quantitative and qualitative research results, as follows: *resilience of children and young people and education / development opportunities of resilience* (Grotberg E., 1995; Werner E.E., 1995; Glantz D.M., Johnson L.J., 1999; Jensen J.M. and Fraser M.W., 2005; Ungar M., 2012; Shaw J. and Frost N., 2013) or *resilience of the population in case of disasters or terrorist attacks:*

(Ronan K. and Johnston D., 2005; Bonanno, Galea S, Bucciarelli and Vlahov D., 2006; Tucker M.P., Pfefferbaum B., North S.C., Kent J.D.A., Burgin E.C., Parker E. D., et al., 2007; Southwick M.S., Litz T.B., Charney D., Friedman J.M., 2011).

Fewer are the studies addressing the issue of resilience across groups, communities or organizations. Resilient organizations are able to achieve simultaneously: performance management, which requires consistency, efficiency, elimination of waste and maximization of short-term results and change management, which requires foresight, innovation, experimentation and improvisation, aiming at achieving long term results.

We can also say that an organization with a strong resilience is an entity able to preserve their functional characteristics under the action of disturbance, where there is not needed for control systems, reactive scenarios, in which members know the specific risks and threats, they accept, they anticipate and manage them while the organization manages to form a desirable organizational behavior.

The hypothesis we left from was: the better factors that influence resilience in military organizations, the critical moments in the contemporary military action, are known, the requirements for a resilient organization are more clear, leading to a more accurate determination of the intervention strategy to maintain the military structure in a state of operational readiness, depending on the concrete situation of the operational environment.

Another important criterion of our research was to evaluate objectively the issues addressed, without preconceptions or conjectural interpretation, reporting components of the intervention strategy (resilience development) to the current security environment and taking into account the criteria for establishing the strategy, intervention substantiation as well as outcome evaluation methods.

The critical analysis of specialized literature was the method by which we tried to distinguish by valid arguments what is positive, realistic and effective from what may be wrong and harmful in addressing the issue of military organization resilience growth, in relation to the requirements of the current operational environment and the national strategies objectives and international commitments.

The analysis was mainly a theoretical one, based on logical reasoning, trying, thus, to highlight the essence of the studied phenomena, to present reality and help dislodge some relevant lessons and conclusions in order to achieve effective management of the military organization resilience growth process given modern war.

### **3. Physiognomy and the Current Operational Environment Requirements**

In recent decades, domestically and internationally, numerous changes have occurred in all the political, social, economic, military, fields etc., resulting in spectacular and contradictory developments. All these require shifts, reevaluation and redirection on ways of organization and conducting military actions.

Currently many other sources of uncertainty, risks and threats, mainly asymmetric, atypical, non-conventional, hybrid, have been added, hence a great variety of conflicts (ethnic, religious, cultural, economic, terrorism, counterterrorism, insurgency, counterinsurgency etc.) that require to be addressed.

Also, classical, traditional military conflicts with obvious symmetries suggesting hybrid conflicts where indirect approaches, atypical asymmetries prevail and an obvious complex of threats manifests itself (military, economic, psychological, informational, social, environmental), making the separation between peace and war extremely difficult.

The new operational environment is characterized by a high degree of instability and unpredictability, by the occurrence of

new risks and threats, especially of those with hybrid character.

The current war paradigm is complex and fluid requiring the adjustment of on the fly for an appropriate response and for taking the initiative in forms that are not exactly conventional, but that lead to success.

In the XXI century, technological development and that of human capabilities are two important goals faced by humanity; but the significant element is to learn “*to balance the material wonders with spiritual requirements*”[2].

Thus, in the military field too, the human resource remains, par excellence, a fundamental one, and the identification of strategies, methods and tools to increase psychological resilience represents the first step towards achieving organizational resilience.

The new features of the modernly-digitized battle space, the emergence and implementation of concept components such as the Information War, the Network-Centric Warfare, the Irregular Warfare, does not mean a mere improvement or a change of the “platform type” model, but involves a new thinking and design of military operations, known as the new “*mental model*”[3]. It is based on collating and disseminating information with a view to increase awareness of the battle space and automatically that of *resilience*, of improving decision processes, and ultimately, of the better synchronization and coherence of military force components.

In terms of making professional and resizing armies, of the permanence of transformational processes and diversification of tasks, the military leader will need to know very well, how the military organization functions, how to efficiently manage the financial, material resources and especially human ones. It must be able to use methods of scientific analysis, going from cause to anticipation and prevention for the effective and timely resolution of problems arising in critical situations in the battle space.

Increasingly more, military forces are called upon to perform a wide spectrum of military operations, from combat operations to those of stabilization and reconstruction (Irregular Warfare), under the leadership of an international organization, in especially difficult actionable contexts. Therefore, some studies present the fact that the military staff participating to such missions must be respondent to some criteria[4] ranked into two categories: *specific* and *general* to military leaders:

- *general criteria* addressing the following requirements: a high degree of intelligence, tact, persuasion and negotiation capacity in difficult situations, impartiality towards the parties in conflict, a high level of discipline and culture, medically fit;
- *specific criteria* – the military leader should be a good diplomat, malleable and fast decision making, should have a high sense of responsibility, speak fluently another international language, as needed, communication and negotiation qualities and skills, have experience in conducting military structures and skills in working with all means of equipment (communications, computers, maps etc.).

The new demands of the modern battle space raise other requirements to the military as well[5]:

- a) *physical and mental* (possibilities to adapt to strictly controlled living and working conditions, a rapid response to external stimuli action, resistance to exercise and prolonged mental stress conditions, equilibrium in behaviour and aggression when the situation requires, without violating national laws and national and international military regulations etc.);
- b) *intellectual and cultural* (developed capacity to memorize and process information, logical and quick thinking, creativity and tactical orientation in space, improved skills in handling techniques and weapons);
- c) *moral-volitional* (winner mentality and attitude, honour and dignity, self-

confidence and the in the unit to which he belongs, energy and courage, loyalty to the military organization and national values, spirit of sacrifice etc.).

Also, military leaders must have other skills, at least as important, if not even more important than fighting: knowing and effectively managing military structures especially in crisis situations; the ability to motivate subordinates to keep their loyalty and trust (in him and the goals of the organization), being a leading character (strength and moral responsibility); having presence of mind, being calm, lucid in difficult situations; being open-minded in understanding and solving problems/family and social needs of subordinates etc.; all should become not only some principles, but *tools to increase the military structures resilience*.

#### **4. Specific Design Elements**

Modern warfare with its full of risks situations, hazards and unforeseen require all the mental, moral and cognitive resources of a human being. In war, the military is forced to fight simultaneously on several fronts: self-struggle (to overcome fear and to maintain lucidity, calmness, self-control), fighting with weapons in use to its superior parameters, fighting on ground, climate and atmospheric conditions and the actual confrontation with the opponent and his actions, to understand the opponent's intentions, to reveal his tactics in time (conventional, hybrid, psychological), to find the most appropriate ways to counter them appropriately on time. All these elements produce changes in the behaviour of the military and in that of military structures, they diminish the mental strength, confidence (in self, in commanders, in weapons), the momentum in action, which affects the accomplishment of assigned objectives.

In this context, resilience involves organizing and founding a coherent and diversified set of actions through which to achieve the psycho-moral level maintenance of the military and also the

skills to cope with overwhelming situations, so that they together (like organizational structure) should be able to perform received missions. To meet the requirements of this objective there is a need that military leaders at all levels know and apply the requirements of scientific development, embodied in what we call the design of measures to increase the resilience of military structures in operation.

Design is understood as a rational way of rigorous scientific training and by a systemic optic of an activity, in order to achieve maximum quantitative and qualitative results. To design means to conduct in advance a group of activities, such as: defining the tasks to which attention and effort must be directed, choosing the means, the instruments that will be used to fulfil these missions, identifying appropriate methods for the maximum use of human and material resources, specifying methods and assessment strategies.

Thus, systemically organized, the activity specific to resilience development includes the following items that can be seen in Fig. 1:

- *the source* or “aggressor” - represented by all factors (intrinsic or extrinsic: fear, environmental factors, enemy actions) that affect the individual and the military structure;
- *the strategy*, which includes: courses of action, missions, resources, restrictions;
- *the process* - delineates planned actions to carry out the missions set out in the adopted strategy;
- *the target group* - represents the individual, the group on which the action is performed. Some authors use the concept of “*product*”[6], this representing significant changes in the behaviour obtained from the individual or the group as a result of actions aimed at increasing resilience.

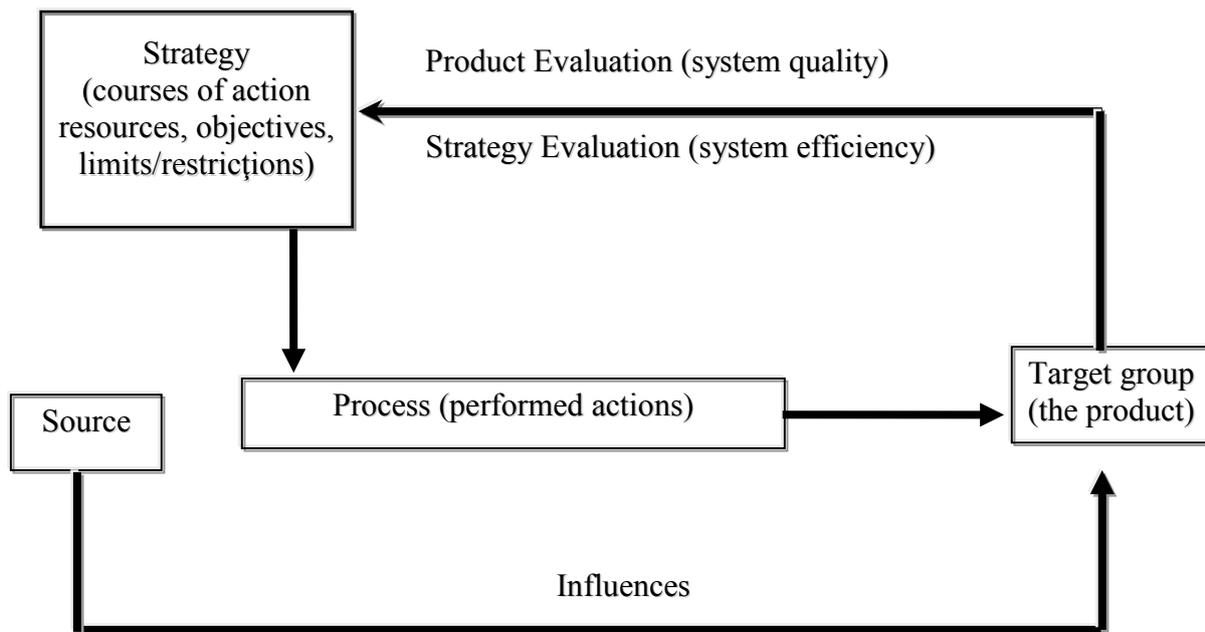


Figure no. 1: Modeling the process of influencing in the sense of resilience growth

The developed model analysis shows that the battle between negative effects and resilience is a confrontation of resources and skills/abilities. Thus, the situations in which we have fewer resources but more power are real, so that successes in resilience in relation to the influencing factors and produced effects may be reported. The same pattern shows the presence of a source that affects the organization or even of a perpetrator who uses personal influence strategies and in which the actions taken to increase resilience operate with reverse connections and a product aimed at changing the “target” or target group quality. This model allows the rigorous interconnection of objectives and resources needed to assess the product or the strategy and implicitly resuming the process and the actions taken to increase resilience.

### 5. The Content of Design Stages

In developing the overall design on the influence process in the sense of resilience growth the following steps are pursued: a) *defining the source or the aggressor*; b) *determining the intervention strategy*; c) *the intervention process foundations*; d) *establishing procedures for assessing the product*.

a) *Defining the source or the aggressor* includes those activities by which factors, actions and intentions of the influencing source as well as values, norms and capacities that may be affected are reported. In the context of military operations, in order to define the potential or actual aggressor, influencing factors from the operating environment and the forms, methods and tools with the highest probability of being employed by the enemy should be defined with sufficient precision.

b) *The intervention strategy determination* is the core of design activities and involves *the directions, objectives determination, the determination of main topics of intervention, of resources and restrictions* posed by the development of this highly complex process.

*Lines of action* are set according to the size of the intervention, the resources available and the level to which it is addressed. These may include: certain influencing factors from the operational environment, aspects of the actions of personal forces, the enemy’s influencing system (e.g. psychological operations) and others.

The *Intervention objectives* to increase resilience may be established on courses of action or by a synthetic expression of the

actions specific destination. Lines of action are closely related to the *main intervention themes* which refer to those ideas from different fields of military activities that the enemy proposed to destabilize or compromise, meant to guide or to maintain military behaviour in the sense of real interest confrontation (war).

*Resources* condition any strategy and regard human capabilities and the experience acquired in the field and also the specific available technology and the financial possibilities. The design of these resources, especially of the financial and technical ones, will be based on the forms and methods of influence (political or otherwise), the actual situation (fighting operations, stabilization and reconstruction missions) and the opportunities available in this view.

*Restrictions* stem from the complexity of social systems modeling in general and the human psyche, in particular, but also include certain limitations imposed by the lack of adequate technical, financial and human resources.

c) *The justification of the intervention process.* The intervention process to increase resilience includes all forms, methods, procedures, means and tools employed in a well designed, consistent and effective action. This process, as complex activity includes both organizational measures and influence measures, thus, they can be grouped into: *preparatory* and *actual response actions*.

*Preparatory actions* aim at the development of the structures' combat capacity maintaining strategy and that of suppressing disturbing effects of different types. Within these we identify: the analysis and inventory of new types of risks, dangers and challenges currently faced by organizations (military units) and their implications for organizational resilience, the development of strategies that include methods and tools to increase organizational resilience, viable solutions for developing psychological resilience of the human resource and the implementation of a "resilience culture" etc.

*Actual response actions* are subdivided into:

- *preventive actions* including: educational activities (special mental training designed to achieve a strong moral, a thorough tactical training), appropriate technical and material equipment, good living conditions, useful information supply on training activities and mission planning, conducting briefings for the next special event/mission with possible trauma presentation, the permanent request for information about the acquired stress, about the mental state, about issues faced by soldiers/units and how to act, routine debriefing (realized by leaders of small units) after various actions, debriefing made by priests and medical staff.
- *actions to limit and suppress* the effects of factors in the operational environment and those regarding the influencing actions triggered by the enemy (identifying sources of influence and effects on the fighters, the performance of strategies for applying the most effective tools.

During fight actions, actions take place for the identification and treatment of panicked or discouraged soldiers or having a mental trauma (extreme stress.), of soldiers who are affected by combat or operational stress. In this respect some clear principles are applied. Specialized assistance systems share certain basic principles for preventing and treating disorders specific to combat. The U.S. Army expresses the basic principles for combat and operational stress control[7] by the BICEPS - Brevity, Immediacy, Contact, Expectancy, Proximity, and Simplicity.

*Brevity* - initial rest and replenishment at combat and operational stress control facilities located close to the soldier's unit should last no more than 1 to 3 days. Those requiring further treatment are moved to the next level of care

*Immediacy* - It is essential that intervention measures be initiated as soon as possible

when operations permit. Intervention is provided as soon as symptoms appear.

*Contact* - an affected military must be encouraged to continue to think of himself as a warfighter, rather than a patient or a sick person. The intervention team coordinates with the unit's leaders to learn whether the overstressed individual was a good performer prior to the adverse reactions. Whenever possible, representatives of the unit or messages from the unit tell the Soldier that he is needed and wanted back. The intervention team coordinates with the unit leaders, through unit medical personnel or chaplains, any special advice on how to assure quick reintegration when the person returns to his unit.

*Expectancy* - give positive expectation of rapid recovery and return to duty. Of all the things said to a military suffering from fatigue or extreme stress, the words of his small-unit leader have the greatest impact due to the positive bonding process that occurs. A simple statement from the small-unit leader to the soldier that he is reacting normally to stress and is expected back soon has positive impact. Small-unit leaders should tell Soldiers that their comrades need and expect them to return. When they do return, the unit treats them as every other Soldier and expects them to perform well

*Proximity* - soldiers requiring observation or care beyond the unit level are evacuated to facilities in close proximity to, but separate from the medical or surgical patients at the nearest medical company. It is best to send soldiers who cannot continue their mission and require more extensive intervention to a facility other than a hospital, unless no other alternative is possible. Combat and operational stress reactions are often more effectively managed in areas close to the unit.

*Simplicity* - indicates the need to use brief and straightforward methods to restore physical well-being and selfconfidence. The simple (austere) intervention methods for treating battle fatigue are summarized by the "Five Rs"[8] and the following actions:

reassurance of normality, rest (respite from combat or break from the work), replenish bodily needs (such as thermal comfort, water, food, hygiene, and sleep), restore confidence with purposeful activities and contact with his unit, return to duty and reunite soldier with his unit.

d) *Establish evaluation procedures.* Efficiency rating helps us appreciate whether we met the targets, if the results obtained meet expectations: development of the military's mental resistance to the action of operational and combat environment influencing factors, the consolidation of the military's self-confidence, confidence in their own leaders, in weaponry, the control of self-psycho-moral discouraging, the ability to limit the influence of psychological actions performed by the enemy, the rapid psychological recovery and restoration of the moral-volitional capacity of the military personnel.

## **6. Methodological Principles and Practical Means of Increasing the Military's Psychological Resilience and Organizational Resilience**

The practice of fighting military actions and especially of those regarding the stabilization and reconstruction performed in various operations theatres, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo has enabled the depiction and generalization of some principles (Garamone J., 2001, Yanakiev Y., Nikolova K., Daskalov K., Marinov I., 2006) underlying the strategy of organizing and conducting resilience development activities. Therefore, the knowledge and application of methodological principles is a prerequisite for the correct foundation of the process and the creation of conditions to successfully complete it:

- *Timely information* on the battle and the operational environment characteristics;
- *Satisfying the real needs of the organization* in the sense of increasing the capacity to adapt to new types of conflicts;
- *Differentiation of actions/activities* depending on the specific of the

mission and the type of unit (Land Forces, Navy, Air Force);

- *Developing and testing sets of methods and tools to increase organizational resilience.* Assuming that resilience can not be provided a priori at an optimal level, but gradually acquired, both by each individual and the communities or the organization as a whole, we believe that training or resilience growth requires conscious and appropriate formative intervention of organization human resources strategies;
- *Providing a preventive/proactive characteristic* imposes actions that aim at achieving appropriate behaviour at all times;
- *The correlation of actions from the component that increases resilience with the ones in related fields;*
- *The balanced, proportional bonding and harnessing of the rational-logical and affective-emotional component.*

Organizing and carrying out specific actions for developing resilience needs a scientific foundation, strategies and innovative tools and concrete ways, already tested and which have proven their usefulness in various military campaigns: knowledge of risks and threats in the operating environment; knowledge of the values that support the existence of ethnic groups - culture, traditions, language, religion, life-style (in the stabilization and reconstruction operations); ensuring adequate living and combat conditions; military equipment, weapons and modern equipment provisions; developing self-confidence, confidence in leaders and in the combat equipment; training, developing and maintaining a high level of skills and abilities necessary to conduct military operations (training in conditions as close to the modern battlefield); increasing military group cohesion (collective training and exercises); interoperability and accomplishment of a relaxed environment of cooperation and collaboration between the national military structures and allied ones; providing the optimum framework for

adaptation to mission and integration in the multinational structures and s.o.

## **7. Conclusions**

The process targeting the resilience increase of military structures must not have a conjectural character, it being determined, as we have shown above, not only by the concrete actions of the enemy but also by the characteristic elements of the battle space, and by those related to training, and by the adaptive power of the military and the units to adversity.

Making design as the organization and development of activities that increase resilience are determined by a number of factors central to ensuring their effectiveness, in meeting the objectives.

Factors derived from the team dealing with the methods and tools to increase resilience application could be: professional competence, cultural level, moral profile, prestige and authority, the ability and courage to openly address specific issues, communication style, the degree of knowing the effects that might have an influence on the individual and the organization as a result of adversity emergence etc.

Regarding the military structure that is the subject of resilience development program, it determines a number of factors that can affect the actions of intervention: the education level, the combative capacity, the degree of homogeneity of military groups, the degree of satisfying the requirements and needs of the organization, assimilation possibilities, adoption of influencing messages etc.

*The proposed theoretical model correlates the typology of risks and threats in the battlefield with strategies to increase organizational resilience.* This model also accomplishes the correspondence between the identification of situations characterized by risk and threats faced by organizations, on the one hand, and the strategy (methods and tools) suitable for increasing organizational resilience, on the other hand. The scientific basis of the theoretical model can be an important management tool,

developed in algorithmic manner, customized by types of organization and will provide options for developing a resilient spirit.

The identification, the knowledge and the application of principles, requirements and rules necessary for the design, organization or the effective conduct of the resilience growth process provides the necessary conditions for successful training and ongoing military missions assigned.

The professional military of today's modern armies, but especially military leaders who command military units in operations need as rich and as diverse a range of intervention possibilities for training, personal development, and military organization to elevated levels from the point view of resilience. The assembly regarding the lines of effort localized until long ago, as a priority the creation and maintenance of a high mental state for each military and the whole unit, but currently, we consider it necessary to move to another

level, that of ensuring a high level of organizational *resilience*. The whole history of wars has confirmed the conclusion that, in addition to tactics, technical equipment, logistical capacity etc., man with his psycho-moral resources or the ones developed from the organization cohesion and his capacity to respond to specific battle stimuli proved to be factors indispensable for victory.

The concern for assessing, achieving and maintaining a certain level of military units resilience will be, in our opinion, in a main direction, a requirement to achieve the training process objectives, those of national defence missions or those of stabilization and reconstruction. Therefore, only a scientifically founded design strategy for the implementation process of organizational resilience development could ensure the efficiency and consistency of military actions specific to the new operational environment.

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