STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONTEMPORARY MILITARY PHENOMENON

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Abstract: *Strategic leadership is an important activity for the armed forces of a state and for the overall leadership of society. At strategic level, the process of influencing is determined by a series of objective factors, which consequently determine the level and intensity of the strategic action.*

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1. Introduction

In the view of military theorists and practitioners, leadership is a paramount activity, which ensures the functionality of the military organization in terms of efficiency, both in times of peace and at war. At strategic level, military leadership generates the success or failure in military action.

While at economic level, the failure of management materializes into poor quality services or even bankruptcy, in strategic military action, inefficient management leads to many deaths, economic disaster and even the disappearance of the state. This is why, in terms of importance, the military strategic leadership is on top.

2. Concept of strategic leadership

The concept of leadership is relatively new in the Romanian organizational culture and is perceived as a new type of scientific leadership. Although the concept is quite clear, from the perspective of strategic military leadership in the context of the contemporary military phenomenon, due to its complexity and its macro-social

implications, strategic leadership should be understood at systemic level as a complex process through which the commander, supported by the major state, establishes the mission and the best methods of fulfillment. Obviously, we should also consider the ability of the leader to influence the armed forces staff, in order to determine an effective action, as well as the human relationships that form between them before and during the military action.

Thus, through a complex process of strategic communication, the strategic leader exerts a directed interpersonal influence, which ensures the achievement of the strategic military missions.

In the context of the contemporary military phenomenon and from the perspective of the strategic level of war, I believe that leadership has the following features:

- it directs the behavior of personnel within hierarchically structured military organizations;
- it mobilizes military, political, economic, psychological or other resources to stimulate, engage and meet the military

and civilian expectations regarding national defense;

- it is a process, through which the commander, supported by the major state, defines and transforms the status-quo in order to defend the national security interests;

- it is a complex form of social influence, through which the socio-military environment is transformed through directives and orders into a strategic reality;

- it is a process of influencing the activities of the military structures of a state or an alliance in order to secure the military victory over the opponent; -it operationalizes the strategic vision and the national values of the alliance or of humanity;

- it creates the strategic goal and offers the strategic directions of action of the armed forces;

- it creates the change of reality and adaptation to the new strategic environment;

- it orientates and rewards the national defense human resource in order to act in line with strategic reality and devotion to national values;

- it establishes the meaning and direction to be followed by the armed forces in order to achieve operational coherence and fulfillment of the strategic missions;

- it gravitates in the sphere of vision and inspiration of leaders who induce the direction towards state defense objectives.

3. Strategic leadership as a process

Strategic Leadership is a deliberate influence process, with the aim to achieve victory, through the coherent action of a large group of armed forces, belonging to a state or group of states.

The Armed Forces Group is structured into categories of military forces and weapons or joined weapons and their leaders are those who transmit and amplify the orders and directives of the senior hierarchical leaders.

The strategic goal is the essence of the process of strategic influence and must be analyzed and understood very well in order to be fulfilled within the established deadline. Any delay or misunderstanding generates malfunctions and may lead to military defeat.

The charisma of the strategic commander and that of his direct subordinates serve as a model for the other subordinate militaries and motivates them to act.

The leader in the military organization must be a model for its members, and this role model feature, along with charisma, are the essence of military leadership in general and strategic leadership in particular.

Strategic leadership, defined as a process of achieving an optimal solution for military problems, involves the existence of a vast decision-making experience under conditions of informational uncertainty.

Military leaders solve quickly and efficiently organizational problems by providing solutions based on knowledge, solutions that foster a sense of security for the members and, implicitly, ensure the optimal functionality of the organization. The commander (the chief) knows what he is doing, when he does it and how he does it set the example through which the subordinates are motivated to be fully involved in decision making.

Strategic leadership is strongly determined by the organizational environment. Thus, a commander at the top of the military hierarchy influences directly or indirectly the hierarchically inferior leaders and this influence is experienced up to the last member of the organization.

The process of influencing, which is essential to leadership, is carried out by the strategic leader consciously and intentionally. Thus, we can define influence as being the ability to change the behavior of the subordinates, in a form favorable for the military organization.

Influence generates change in opinions, attitudes and beliefs, as well as change in the subordinate behaviors. Influence is the basis of power relationships and in the

military domain; it is exerted also through effective methods of coercion.

4. Influencing methods

Among the methods employed by strategic military leaders in the influencing process, we can mention:

- the persuasion method: the leader is coherent, has increased communication skills, and uses only the power of persuasion within the influencing process;
- the coercive method: the leaders mainly use only coercive means to impose their will on the subordinates;

- the mixed method: in the process of influencing the subordinates, military leaders can make use both of their persuasion power and coercive means [1]. In practice, the influence methods are used situationally. Thus, a leader will use coercive influencing methods after persuasion methods have failed. However, there are situations in which some leaders, generally those more inexperienced, use only coercive methods of influence.

The main purpose of exerting the influence of the strategic leader is achieving the cooperation of the members of the military organization.

In the current military organization and in the context of globalized and cyber-based society, we can say that there are several types of influence at strategic leadership level:

- Rational influence: the leader uses logical arguments and obvious reality to persuade subordinates that his decisions are viable and will conduct to the accomplishment of the mission;

- Inspiration: the commander uses his influence by referring to the values, ideals and aspirations of the subordinates, in such a way that his demands or proposals are assumed and fulfilled by them;

- Consultation: The strategic leader stimulates the participation of subordinates in the planning of a strategy, activities or changes;

- Closeness: a type of influence in the leadership activity, which is frequently used

by commanders at the base of the military pyramid, and consists in achieving a friendly, comradely behavior and a mood favorable to human co-operation in such a way that the missions are carried out under efficient conditions;

- Personal qualities: can decisively influence the behavior of subordinates by awakening feelings of loyalty, which allows the military leader to ask for involvement in action;

- Opportunity exchange: is another way of influencing, by which the military leader promises a distribution of the benefits resulting from the action to the subordinates, while fulfilling the objectives of the organization;

- Coalition: this type of influence consists in convincing the subordinates to engage in the accomplishment of the tasks of the military organization by following the example of other militaries involved in similar actions that have been successfully concluded

- Legitimate tactics: consist of invoking the commanding authority in motivating decisions to generate behaviors aimed at achieving the intended purpose;

- Influencing by exerting pressure: it is another way of achieving the set purpose, in which the commander influences the subordinates through requests, threats, frequent checks or persistent repetitions[2].

- It can be easily observed that there are a multitude of ways, in which the leader can influence subordinates to fulfill his decisions.

Strategic leadership in the current military organization is based on effective leaders and effective leadership strategies.

5 Characteristics of a good leader

Studies regarding the in-born traits of a good military leader have shown that these are just factors which conduct to the development of a leadership performing formally, while scientific training and leadership experience are decisive factors in this leadership process.

In the current strategic leadership, we believe that a good commander or high level decision maker should:

- involve actively, directly and effectively the subordinates in the decision-making process;
- be open to organizational transformation, in line with the evolution of the military phenomenon and the technological development of society;
- communicate effectively and openly and to foster the development of strategic communication;
- use the most modern and efficient methods and techniques to motivate subordinates while stimulating creativity and responsibility;
- be equally preoccupied with the fulfillment of the decisions and the status of the subordinate staff
- perfectly know the theory and the strategic art and apply them creatively in the leadership process;
- fulfill on time, integrally and qualitatively the tasks deriving from the attributions of a strategic leader;
- always be a positive personal example, a model for the subordinates and the one who will come as a replacement;
- permanently promote creativity, innovation and novelty in the leadership process;

- to be a very good manager of the processes and phenomena specific to the military domain[3].

- In theory, we can encounter ideas regarding:

- the ability to lead is only found at certain people and not at most people,
- leaders are born and are not created;
- the leaders are charismatic;
- leaders control, direct and manipulate.

All these theories are partly true and my points of view regarding these are as follows:

- the ability to lead is developed in certain people, depending on the social and educational environment in which the person forms and develops;
- military leaders are formed through training programs and develop as a result of the experience they have gained;
- the strategic military leader is a charismatic person;
- the leader controls and directs the military organization on the basis of a wide-ranging process of influence.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, strategic leadership is an important activity, through which the current military organization, under the technological and social conditions, fulfills the set purposes.

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