

“A CHANGE OF PARADIGM” IN DEVELOPING LAND FORCES OFFICERS’ PROFESSIONAL SKILLS IN ACCORDANCE WITH HYBRID WARFARE TASK-REQUIREMENTS

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In future conflicts, not only traditional or asymmetric actions will be used, but also a combination of the two in order to solve the disputes involving national and international actors, materialized today in different manifestation forms called hybrid war. The hybrid threats tell about the evolution of the contemporary and future threats, about the necessity of a national effort concerted towards providing an immediate effective response to these threats. From a different perspective, the diversity and the complexity of the issues raised by the hybrid threats prove that it is necessary to go beyond the technical or sequential nowadays answers. It results first that it is required to develop an appropriate security strategy which will make possible the efficient action against hybrid risks and threats, in an effective, operational and unitary manner. Therefore, the present article aims at sequentially highlighting the aspects supporting the need to correlate the coordinates of the national security strategy to the planning, conduct and quality assessment of the process of training officers from the “change of paradigm” perspective, in order to acquire the professional skills conforming to the task-requirements specific to the hybrid war. Nothing more natural, more necessary and at the same time more current in this perspective than modernizing the military continuous education system in accordance with the strategic norm of competence.

Key words: *threat, competence, asymmetric war, hybrid war, paradigm, security strategy, task-requirement, professional.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 3rd millennium has been characterized by a high level of “*strategic fluidity*” and by a reconfiguration of the power relations both at a global and a regional level. This “*strategic fluidity*” represents determinations that the political and military analysts, the head of state’s leadership, various organizations and other international

actors must take into account when reshaping the vision on the national security and defense issues.

In this context, Romania is concerned about increasing its capacity to plan a viable national security strategy, able to support the preservation of its national interests. Based on that and taking into consideration the realities of the Romanian society, a “*change of paradigm*” is required in developing

the professional skills of the army officers according to the task-requirements specific to the "hybrid" war, as a result of the different types of direct or indirect aggressions.

2. CONCEPT

Presently, we are witnessing the change of paradigm in the traditional war, determined by the fluidization, the gradually fading of the distinction between violence and non-violence, the interference between the terms, witnessing also phenomena and trends of replacing the latter. More accurately, the objectives traditionally promoted through instruments of violence are insinuated and supported by non-violent means (or, if not non-violent, at least non-armed).

"The contemporary wars – in Alvin and Heidi Toffler's opinion – rise or lower the price of gasoline at the pump, of food in the store, of shares at the stock exchange. They cause ecological disasters. They erupt in our homes by means of the TV set screen. (...) Actually, what we watch was aimed at directions that the global public does not comprehend even today, a transformation of the military power which is intelligible only as we discover (...) the remarkable parallels between the emergent economy of the future and the rapidly changing nature of war itself, each accelerating the change within the other. Simply put into words: as we proceed with the transition from the brute force economies to brain force economies, we also necessarily invent what cannot be called but «war through brain power»"[1]

The well-known authors, spouses Alvin and Heidi Toffler, highlighted the changes at the end of the millennium, characterized by the revolution in military affairs which was more profound than most of the military analysts and specialists could have imagined which tends to become reality. The entire society is changing and with it, the army is required to *"also change simultaneously at all levels – from technology to culture, to organization, strategy, tactics, training, doctrine and logistics."*[2]

Currently, new risks and vulnerabilities have been identified in regard to the national, regional and global security. Among these risks and vulnerabilities we must carefully analyze those that the specialists call asymmetric threats.

The asymmetry *"means refusing to obey the rules of battle imposed by the opponent, thus making all operations unpredictable."*[3]

This involves the use of force concurrently with the use of the unpredictable forces and weapons for which the defensive means are not always adjusted, methods which refuse the conventional war and are based on surprising and disorienting the opponent. Their purpose is to exploit the opponent's weaknesses in order to maximize one's effects.

On the other hand, analyzing the recent conflicts, the specialists unanimously consider that the threats that generate wars can be divided into conventional, unconventional and hybrid, the last ones being considered preponderant in the near future. Taking into account the cause-effect binomial, we shall see that *hybrid threats* are the ones that generate *hybrid wars*.

This concept of *hybrid war* has been developed in the military thinking in the US during the last decade, as a response to the necessity to adapt the military strategy to the realities of the new contemporary operational environment.

The term *hybrid war* [4] was defined by the research team from the Marine Corps of the United States led by Frank G. Hoffman and James N. Mattis. The concept was launched in the academic world in 2005 with the publishing of an article named *Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. [5] In the authors' opinion, the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have influenced the process of rethinking the military strategy in order to adapt it to these particular conditions.

On the other hand, in relation to hybrid war, one should mandatorily analyze the concept of *hybrid threat*. Hybrid threats develop rapidly, taking advantage of the conventional and hybrid opportunities, suitably combined with the opponent's weaknesses and the pursued objectives. At the same time, these types of threats take into account the perceived weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the opponent. Also, the hybrid threats aim at striking the adversary by using both conventional and non-conventional actions, asymmetric and symmetric means. Moreover, the phrase "*hybrid threat*" is expressed in connection with the conceptualization of a realistic description of the threat which pictures the way in which potential opponents use their capabilities to counteract the symmetrical advantages, in order to achieve their strategic objectives.

At the same time, the term "*hybrid threat*" is a sophisticated amalgam of unrestricted activities. A hybrid threat is characterized by decentralized command, military and non-military actions conducted simultaneously, combining the traditional, the asymmetric, the terrorist actions and disruptive lethal means, the specific operational environment conditions, all with the intent to take into consideration time and space to make the best decision according to the situation. [6] The concept of hybrid threat, once adopted, will persist and will expand through the entire spectrum of conflicts.

In Frank Hoffman's opinion, the concept of "*hybrid threat*" is appropriate because it is:

- a concept which describes the evolution of the nature of the conflict;
- a concept that challenges the current conventional military thinking and the intellectual binary classifications which presently define the debates in this field;
- a concept which emphasizes and confirms the width of the human conflict spectrum;
- a concept which amplifies the awareness of the potential risks and fuels the continuous debate related to the operational threat structure. [7]

The critics of the term of "*hybrid threat*" argue that this phrase actually defines a common asymmetric war put into practice through conventional operations. Some view this concept as a particular type of asymmetric war and not as a unique threat in an operational continuum. [8]

“Hybrid threats, accepted as representation at the level of the NATO Allied Command Transformation / ACT, are defined within the margin of an ability of one or more state actors, or a group of non-state actors to use a mix of actions (conventional and unconventional) in the battle space and beyond it, with negative effects on the opponent’s decision-making cycle, towards achieving the pursued objectives.”[9]

In order to be more specific, the best example that illustrates the concept and features of the hybrid threat is the 2014 conflict in Ukraine.

2.DEVELOPING LAND FORCES OFFICERS’ PROFESSIONAL SKILLS IN ACCORDANCE WITH HYBRID WARFARE TASK-REQUIREMENTS

Developing and training the military personnel in general, and the officers, in particular, is one of the priority directions in the process of transforming and affiliating the Romanian military organization to the conceptual and operational evolutions both in the national and European military educational environment. The principles substantiating this orientation are essentially the following:

- the military educational system is part of the national educational system;
- the educational process must satisfy, through its product, the operational needs of the army and the necessity of achieving the interoperability with the NATO member states’ armed forces and, at the same time, and must be connected with the training and the functional responsibilities;

- the objective is represented by achieving the competences of the military leader, established by the beneficiary (the units of the army).

Thereby, it is guaranteed that, through the professional level, the cultural level and the social behavior of the military personnel, the army will become an elite group of the Romanian society.

2.1. Curricular determinations

The design of the military educational system was based on the analytical and diagnostic procedures provided by the education sciences and closely connected to the general transformations of the society and the Romanian army.

To this end, the internal and external pressures of the comprising environments were taken into consideration, as well as their perceivable trends, resulting in:

- the irreversible option of Romania to join the Euro Atlantic structures;
- the general reorganization of the armed forces on services simultaneously with its considerable size reduction;
- the reorganization of the national educational system;
- the academic education of officers focused on their training as a military leader.

At the same time, the transformation of the military educational system started from the premises that, in the reason of the Euro-Atlantic integration, the integration through education is one of the first steps.

Considering these determinations, five essential actions were undertaken:

- the thorough documentation on the western military educational

- systems, developing an inventory of models identifying the trends for the next millennia;
- the assessment of the status and the performance capability of the Romanian military educational system;
 - the definition of the new philosophies of the system, in accordance with the evolutions and the developments in the army, the society and the world;
 - the identification of the main challenges from the comprising environments (military, social-national, international) which compel the system to adapt;
 - the design of the fundamental options and the operational directions in order to simultaneously achieve the two objectives: modernizing the education and achieving compatibility with the western military education systems.

In this way, the two objectives were simultaneously achieved:

- the design of a system which meets the actual and future interests of the Romanian army;
- the development of a system which is compatible with those of the NATO countries.

Since an elementary rule of the effective action involves the identification of priorities, we started with thinking the philosophy of the system, where the fundamental options and “*the model of the final product*” have been included.

2.2. The educational design through the set of graduate requirements

The national security strategy and the task-requirements specific to the modern war (including the hybrid

war) determine the fundamental orientations of the process for the military personnel education. The set of requirements for the process of training the Land Forces officer is materialized in *the graduate model*, an expression of the task-requirements specific to the modern war (including the hybrid one). Certain theoretical and methodological considerations are captured, in regard to the application of the requirements of the national security strategy to molding the graduate profile, desirable from an organizational perspective.

This model was designed according to the skills (warrior, leader, trainer and citizen – all subordinated to its projection as future military leader) and depending on 3 dimensions: to be, to know and to do, based on maximal standards unanimously accepted by NATO. We shall briefly present a few theoretical references which laid the foundation of the design approach.

The educational design involves organizing (structuring) “*the actions and the operations which ensure the functionality of the system and the educational process at a general level, specific/intermediary and real/operational according to the objectives developed in terms of the educational policy*”. [10]

From a systemic perspective, this activity implies anticipatorily defining the objectives, contents, strategies of learning, the evaluation and identifying the relations between them.

The postmodern approach on education suggests the model of the curricular planning of the educational system which implies, as compared to the traditional model, going from the organizational structure founded

on explicitly defined contents to the organizational structure oriented by explicit and implicit objectives and methodologies. The principles of this educational design model [11] are:

- the principle of analyzing the needs of the society;
- the principle of analyzing the needs of the trainee;
- the principle of analyzing the content of the training.

In developing the officer's profile, it is required to identify initially the existent competences, actually practiced and, in connection, the structure of the set of specific functions. It is necessary and useful that the analytical approach to be extended through:

- the historical analysis: questions in past tense which should operate in key moments of the military action;
- the prospective analysis: questions in future tense on the possible and probably evolutions of the plans, vital for exercising the profession;
- evolutions in the global and regional geopolitical context;
- evolutions in the features and nature of warfare (military action);
- combined analysis of the military profession (historical and prospective praxiology).

Following the identification of the characteristic competences and functions institutionally assigned to the officer, a socio-professional model is sequentially built. The officer's template (a resultant of correlating the human model to the social model and the professional model) consists of the roles and functions specific to the military action, materialized in the competences defining the officer,

these representing the strategic norm both in designing the graduate's profile and the training educational system.

The competences express types of actions (functions) and can be divided in groups, the equivalent of the classes of actions grouped in social roles. The first issue in detecting competences (therefore in "*planning*" them) is, as a result, that of identifying roles.

Specifying the abilities as such within the groups of competences methodologically sends us to specifying the functions within the roles. The functions are mainly generated under the impact of tasks, of operational requirements, of actual military challenges that must be faced by the agent of the professional action.

"*The architecture of the professional model*"[12] presents, in a plausible manner, a composition which contains:

- general-human competences (by expressing, we repeat the genetic capability of the professional agent, not in "*diffuse embodiments*" of "*opaque background*", but of combinations appropriate to the specificity and purposes of each professional category);
- social-historical competences, identified by the imperative of adjusting the professions to the social-historical context of the professional action (with the same observation that it is necessary to insist according to the nature of each professional category);
- actual professional competences, directly connected to the "*specificity of detail*" of the professional action.

At this last level, the architecture of the professional model requires and includes the deepening of specifying in the following ways:

- since there are no “*isolated professions*”, each profession being included in a “*category of professions*”, “*the first*” professional competence will aim exactly at the horizon of the professional category, the knowledge and the abilities common to all the professional agents, irrespective of the actual particular profession;
- the particularity of the profession is ultimately “*its hard core*”; the vectorial homogenization of tasks supports the particular constituency (sometimes, even singular of the professions); the professional model will include, mandatorily, a particular-professional competence with a high content of operational specialization;
- as much as it may be centered on tools (physical, technical), the profession is not singularly human; the professions are assumed by groups of professional action, situation which involves the ability appropriate to an individual professional agent to relate and to influence the other individual agents and the entire group (the personal influence ability).

The complexity of the officer’s professional profile is actually in the order of evidence. Certainly, the officer, as opposed to other agents of the professionalized human action and as compared to them (action agents in the classical fields such as engineering, education, economical structures and processes management and so on), is required to professionally form and express

his profile according to the highly stressed specificity of the military action, of the structures and the collectivities in the army. Last but not least, are required the capacities of the historical and political-strategic analysis, of active social integration, of apprehending the global horizon of the national, continental and global security. At the crossroads of all these educational factors, of these professionalization routes, the core of the competences is articulated, their distinct qualification is being built, which can only be one based on specific standards.

The validation of the social-professional model of the military personnel is done depending on the criteria of completeness, essentiality and perennality. Thus, it is generally accepted to articulate the professional profile of the officer by the synergic correlation of the following defining skills:

- the warrior skill;
- the trainer skill;
- the military leader skill;
- the officer-Romanian citizen skill;
- the army specialist skill.

Explaining the skills through competences provides the methodological framework of reflecting the security strategy at the level of the set of educational finalities by operationalizing the competences in educational objectives and contents.

3. REFLECTING THE TASK REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIC TO THE HYBRID WAR IN THE TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR LAND FORCES OFFICERS

“In the horizon of the holistic approach of the officer profession and of the evolution in his career,

a special significance is acquired by the entire training process, the formative continuum on which he is focused. Therefore, we assign to the continuous training of the officer the sense of a set of theoretical and practical activities institutionalized at a system level which implies their direct and organized participation in order to develop their professional competences and the optimizations in relation to the specific functional requirements."[13]

The educational curriculum, according to the general and specific standards of academic evaluation and validation, is centered on developing competences and abilities and not on the content itself. Curricular design is based on the socio-professional model of the officer, developed by the Land Forces Staff.

Substantiating the training according to the competences (which will be developed), meaning to rationalize and optimize the entire training-educational system was gradually done as it follows:[14]

- designing the capabilities specific to competences;
- designing the educational curriculum;
- designing the knowledge, the skills, the behaviors;
- designing the educational subjects (according to competences and abilities).

The analysis based on the areas of generating the capabilities results in the inventory of the capabilities. Relating to this inventory, the academic curriculum specialists design the necessary and sufficient content for forming each capability. Designing the learning content is

done after identifying (designing) the abilities of the military personnel, because:

- the capabilities define, characterize the actual actions and practices of the officer in each of his competences;
- the capabilities create the direct "openness" towards knowledge, since it must be "covered" with the necessary and sufficient content, instructionally developed, supplemented and improved throughout the military career.

Of course, the content which circulates the conceptual elements in regard to the national security, as well as those meeting the requirements to cover the orientations and the openness formulated in the security strategy, is materialized in training modules or subject matters organized and structured according to the modern educational requirements, equally adapted to psychophysiological particularities specific to the human resources involved in the training process.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The framework defined by the topic imposed as a starting point the new paradigms of the national and Euro-Atlantic security. It is now possible to identify the substantiations that the security strategy is inducing on the military body in general and, in particular, on training the officers of the Land Forces.

We concluded, with relevant arguments and illustrations, that the training process, through the assigned and assumed educational end-states, through the content and organization and through the ways

in which it is managed, is actually the product and the expression of the fundamental strategic orientations in accordance with the national security and the expression of the task-requirements specific to the modern war (including the hybrid one). Also, the argumentation necessarily included the comparative relation to the materialization of the studied issues of similar systems in the other NATO member states.

We consider viable and useful the constant and timely application of the correlative approaches which aim at:

- reassessing the educational curriculum designed for training the officers in concordance with the conceptual transformations regarding the national security; any subsequent modification determines a new reassessment;
- redesigning the officer's competences according to the mutations occurred in the spectrum of Land Forces missions;
- matching the requirements regarding the compatibility within NATO structures which should not exceed, but, on the contrary, complement the national security needs.

In this context, it results that the curricular design becomes efficient when it covers, from the perspective of the continuous training, the evolution in the officers' career, it provides specialization according to the function and/or mission and gives the possibility to differentiate based on competences and social needs.

Another conclusion refers to changing the methods, the means, the processes, in one word "the training philosophy" vital for the

present and the future of all the structures of the Romanian armed forces. Transforming the Romanian armed forces, in general, and the Land Forces, in particular, is not a purpose in itself, but the right, timely and decided response to the evolution of the contemporary operational environment, to the transformation of NATO and the commitments that Romania has assumed within EU and within other security and European cooperation organizations.

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