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OFFICERSHIP – THE KEYSTONE CONCEPT IN THE MILITARY CAREER ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract:
This study consist into an undersized but necessary contribution to the Romanian Military Leadership challenging transformation, assuming that the "officership" concept will be (hopefully) used by the Armed Forces to define the desired model of graduates and expand measures to achieve this end state. To understand the way, we must first examine the past. The officership transformation can be adequately understood if we take a look into latest historical improvement of the topic. It makes sense to base this research by examining the developments regarding officership in the US Armed Forces, for instance, like an illustrative paradigm, and comparing it with the circumstances in our military organization. By expanding this investigation and put side by side the developments, a solid foundation could be created for describing this continuous "in progress" status of officership and the feasible alternative to get better in our system.

Key words: officership, leadership, education, career, management, character, expertise, responsibility.

1. Introduction

Ethical leadership is the bedrock for success in the military. Courage and competence win battles, but character wins wars. The military can never lose sight of that. [1]
Christopher Barnes & Joseph Doty

From the early beginning is extremely important to identify what *"officership"* (the word, and more then this, the concept) means. During the typing exercise, I learned that the utterance is red underlined by the computer, indicating the system did not recognize this word. When I used the correction accessible in the Microsoft Word thesaurus, I found two available options: *"officer ship"* and *"officers hip"*. Obviously, no one fulfilled my real intent.

Finally, after a long trip through internet, I found a definition being feasible with this purpose: In the US military learning system (West Point US Military Academy) "officership" is defined as "*the professional practice of being a commissioned leader. An essential part of Officership is a shared professional identity or self-concept, shaped by what an officer must **KNOW** and **DO**, but most important, inspired by a deeply held personal understanding and internalization of what an officer must **BE**. This self-identity inspires and shapes the officer's behavior on and off duty, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.*" [2]

1. Officership in the US Armed Forces

I could not "manage" my platoon up a hill. I had to lead them up there.
James R. McDonough

Romania considers, at the present time, the United States as the best possible political and military allies. We have worked together, in the military, from the highest politic decision makers top to the bottom of the system, in a variety of missions to encompass Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. This common background and mutual respect provide the basis to compare leadership development of army officers in these countries. The organizational culture and the background of the US Armed Forces are feasible to consist in an example of dealing with the sensitive terms of officership.

One of the first intent to use the *"officership"* concept becomes visible in the United States of America, during the Vietnam War.

Before the deployment to Vietnam, the U.S. Army was convinced that its Commission Officers, NCOs and WOs have had the necessary qualities to guarantee the military victory. Based on success in the 2nd WW and Korea, the US Armed Forces had enormous trust in the own leadership. On the other hand, in 1969 a report sent by General William McCaffrey (at that time a Commanding Officer in Vietnam) stated that: *"discipline within the command as a whole has eroded and that within the chain of command communication has broken down."* [3]

In 1970, the US Army War College carried out a study regarding the professionalism and leadership in the officer corps. The study was particularly focus on the *"state of discipline, integrity, morality, and ethics."* [4] The report emphasize a considerable discrepancy within the officer corps from *"the idealized climate"* of military professionalism (characterized by: individual integrity, mutual trust and confidence, unselfish motivation, technical competence, and an unconstrained flow of information) to an *"existing climate"*, distinguished by the *"ambitious, transitory commander – marginally skilled in the complexities of his duties – engulfed in producing statistical results, fearful of personal failure, too busy to talk with or listen to his subordinates, and determined to submit acceptably optimistic reports which reflect faultless completion of a variety of tasks at the expense of the sweat and frustration of his subordinates."* [5]

As a result, in 1971 the U.S. Army Continental Army Command Leadership Board stated that *"In our various personnel and organizational studies, we have been too concerned with management, money and machines, and not concerned enough with motivating men to perform with full effectiveness."* [6]

In the book *"Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army"* written by Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, the writers argued that even previous to the ending fiasco in Vietnam, there were strong warnings that the officer corps was more worried with promoting in their individual careers than with increasing units cohesion. As a result, authors stated that: *"Honor, integrity, and personal responsibility had been abandoned to selfish ends."* [7] Gabriel and Savage identified the essential reason for this moral decline was the managerial ethos. By using universal civilian management policies and techniques, the Army *"turned into a bureaucracy where people were focused on technique, not goals; on self-advancement, not group loyalty; on the career, not tradition and on their own futures, not policy."* [8]

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The *"management ethos"* that was implemented by the US Armed Forces resulted in short-term limited personnel management policies that had a direct impact on the quality of officership. Regularly seen as representing these management guiding principles was: the system of officer rotation (creating the one year tour of duty with a six-month rotation between staff and command positions); the inexperience of officers in military operations (highly linked with the first policy); and the individual personnel system, which produced invariable turnovers in all ranks.

The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Meyer, declared: *"We need to discuss openly the fact that we have been lavish in our rewards to those who have demonstrated excellence in sophisticated business and management techniques. These talents are worthwhile to a leader, but, of themselves, they are not leadership……today, we need sensitivity and backbone beyond that which the past several decades have demanded."* [9]

In the 80s, the American military senior specialists started a bayoneted attack against the (2ndWW and Vietnam fancy developed) very "corporate" model of management in the U.S. Armed Forces. The *"officership"*, totally based on the valuable military leadership concept was the new (but in the same time the very old, classical) idea opposing the managerial way of conduct in the military system.

Anthony G White, in 1986 stated: *"Officers apply discretionary judgment and bear ultimate moral responsibility for their decisions. Their appointment/commission imposes total accountability and unlimited liability. Essential to officership is a unique, shared self-concept consisting of four identities: warrior, servant of the nation, member of a profession, and leader of character. Grounded in Army values, this shared self-concept inspires and shapes the officer."*

When the Cold War finished, the US Armed Forces had witnessed a cultural transform of its officership. A rehabilitated emphasis on morals, the diminishing significance of civilian management techniques, demarcation in leadership levels and organizational leader development changed the conduct and performance of the officers.

The success of the US Armed Forces leadership in the buildup and execution of the Gulf War raised a general feeling that the U.S. Army managed to turn the corner concerning officership. Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm showed that the Army had achieved an effective chain of command, good leadership, and operational success. [10]

Over the years, after the Gulf War, a survey sponsored by the US Army Command and US General Staff College (in 1995) found some concerns about leadership and the command climate noticeably comparable to those reported in the 1970 Army War College Study. [11] In August 1997, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff acknowledged that there were *"cracks"* in unit readiness. [12] In the same year a survey of several thousand soldiers reported that less than half the respondents replied positively to questions of confidence in their leaders. [14] John Kotter clarified that the experience in the 1990s was similar to civilian companies, where most developed a change-resistant culture because management grew more arrogant about its own *"wonderfulness."* [15]

Several editions of FM 22-100 (Army Leadership) stressed the growing importance of what a leader should BE (besides KNOW and DO). A 1999 revised edition of FM 22-100, emphasize and cover for the first time the three levels of leadership: direct, organizational, and strategic. This was based on the acknowledgment that leaders on the superior levels need supplementary tools: *"the skills and competencies needed at the direct level also apply for the other levels, but the other levels demand (above that) more competencies and skills."* [15] Besides setting up the three levels of leadership, the

instruction manual tried to address the emerging problems concerning leadership by stressing the special role of leadership in the Army, the officer's moral and ethical responsibilities, and the need to take and accept risks and promote moral courage. [16]

Each of the defined levels (direct - tactical, organizational - operational, and strategic) was associated with specific schooling, but the new security environment may change these assumptions. Based on the ongoing integration of the three levels of warfare, the officer today is much more likely to make decisions, even within the tactical environment, which could have operational and strategic consequences.

2. Officership in the Romanian Armed Forces

After the end of the 2nd WW, the Romanian Armed Forces were never involved into a major operation. It experienced a tough soviet control during the 50s. During the Cold War the Romanian Armed Forces were almost completely focused on its primary role within Warsaw Treaty. Based on its limited resources, the Armed Forces mainly consisted of conscripts. These conscripts provided not only the mass of the enlisted men, but, at the early beginning, after the 2nd WW, most of the officers, WOs and NCOs at the squad/platoon level as well.

Due to the shortage of time available for training, the lack of knowledge and practical expertise in combat operations, and the need to teach the recruits necessary basic skills, the training system was primarily based on teaching competencies. Little time was allocated for teaching other aspects of leadership, such as values and ethics, and all of these "under the light" of the very communist values. The military system, except a small number of specialized units (mountaineers, paratroopers, etc), was assigned to build the entire socialist infrastructure, with no or a very low level of financial compensation.

The officers were educated in the different branch schools, where the curricula were dedicated mostly to develop the technical and pedagogical proficiency for the platoon level instructors, able to conduct and train the waves of recruits. Romania's defense organization, similar to additional institutions in the nation state, has been reduced to a situation of social and professional immobility, which cannot expected to provide the basis for leadership, alternative to the Communist party elite.

In 1958 Romania moved into an opposing way by demanding the extraction from its territory of all Soviet troops, counselors, and the Soviet resident commissioner (Khrushchev, embarrassed, called this a unilateral troop decrease, contributing to better European security). Dropping its contribution in Warsaw Pact significantly, Romania also denied allowing Soviet forces, or Warsaw Pact quick reaction forces, to go across or to perform military exercises on the own country land. A new era of very national feeling started and the political advisors inside the military system were clever enough to conduct the education, building the individual and collective attitude based on this intensified patriotic sentiment.

However, not enough to isolate the military system from the nation, and that was demonstrated in the main Romanians cities in December 1989. The officers' good sense and their ability to understand the real mission of an army, was the keystone in the 1989 revolution, when the decision makers, in front of the own families and friends were the young platoon and company commanders.

It seems that *"the military's professional status gives rise to a conception of professional integrity that would permit disobedience (at both an institutional and individual level) of political authority in those cases where the political authority ordered*

military actions that would severely endanger the wellbeing of the nation or that would require military personnel to perform illegal actions." [17]

One of the effects of the new political and social environment was a renewed discussion about the education of professional officers at the Military Academies.

In the context of the new exigencies imposed by the status of NATO member that Romania has and those generated by joining the European Union, the Armed Forces must accomplish ever more complex missions, their success depending on the quality of the human resources involved. Romania joined NATO in 2004. As a consequence, extensive preparations were made to abolish conscription by 2007 and create a professional army in place of a conscripted one.

The MoD specialized organizations (Human Resources Management Directorate) and the senior specialists in military education reviewed for few times in the last 20 years the ends, ways, the means of this education, the education plans and curricula, which resulted in refocusing the educational goals of the Military Academies towards increased academics. The main focus was on a core of managerial disciplines, on military science and basic military training. This caused an amplified importance to the military management that was mainly focused on what a leader must KNOW and DO, and less on what a leader must BE. The effort of the military specialists in education is to reinforce the idea of leadership, not against the managerial way of thinking but more focused on the professional military education based on the main core of values which make the military system to be and have the own crystal clear defined organizational culture.

2. Conclusion

What we can see in this moment in our system is a reinforced emphasis on the very theoretical and technical aspects of management and an almost complete disregard of the mental and ethical elements of leadership. However, this conclusion is not in complete agreement with the overall content of the Romanian military policy paper, where are very careful defined ethics and leader development as crucial for effective leadership. This difference between the content of the paper and the practice of leadership in the educational system finally led to a black deadlock. While a few projects were proposed to instill moral principles and ethics in the leader development, not a single one was put in practice.

Different official policy papers and the academies curricula define in a different manner the leader as a manager, commander and professional. What is important to understand is that: the manager organizes and allocates his assets in order to assure that the mission can be accomplished at the right place in the given time, but, when and if the manager needs to influence people to reach these objectives, the leader steps forward.

Nowadays Romania has the own specialists being part of a multinational team consisting on curriculum specialists from 16 military institutions in 12 countries (U.S., UK, Canada, Norway, Latvia, Albania, Romania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova). They met in the early November for their fourth workshop in order to finalize the NATO standard reference curriculum for professional military education (PME). The curriculum will cover pre-commissioning, captain-level, and staff college-level phases of officer professional development. The Allied Command Transformation Senior Enlisted Advisor also attended with a team of experts to explore the production of a reference curriculum for non-commissioned officers.

NATO requested that PfPC [18] develop this product after receiving numerous queries from Partner countries about the existence of such a reference, in order to put the

foundation of a new, better educated, skilled and trained military leader able to face the modern battle space with its new, surprising, different and challenging phenomenon.

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[14] John Kotter, *"Cultures and Coalitions,"*, ed. Rowan Gibson, London: Nicholas Breatley Publishing Ltd., 1997, p. 169.
[15] U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership, Field Manual 22-100,* Washington D.C., U.S. Department of the Army, 1999, p. 1-36.
[16] Ibid, p. 54, 55.
[17] Carl Cuelemans & Guy van Damme, *"The Soldier and the State: An Analysis of Samuel Huntington's View on Military Obedience Towards Political Authority,"* Professional Ethics, 2002, p. 7-22. – There are other forms of conflict between the military and the political authority. Carl Ceulemans and Guy van Damme discuss four ways (based on Huntington's views) in which the military and the political might conflict: conflicts between military obedience and political wisdom, between military obedience and military competence, between military obedience and legality, and between military obedience and basic morality.
[18] Partnership for Peace Consortium of Military Academies