

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST AND SHARING THE RESPONSIBILITIES IN MULTINATIONAL MILITARY COALITIONS

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Abstract: *The trust" has multiple links and is relatively easier to be built in peacetime, among soldiers belonging to different nationalities, through the polyvalent knowledge and extended common use. The conclusions of my research, conducted in the theatre of operation from Afghanistan, regarding of this subject are double. First conclusion is that the xeno-cultural images are very resistant to change and seems to be cultural constant values. The values and the images that are part of the cultural nucleus of a nation are remaining stable, with changes happening gradually. The second conclusion is that attitudes towards other different cultures are exposed to changing. In wartime, in extended stress conditions, the trust is eroding or strengthens depending on the common values, the forming process to become soldiers, a common history, organizational policies, etc. The distrust is generating frictions, separation; share the area of responsibilities and lowering the level of interoperability in a coalition.*

Keywords: *trust; responsibilities; military coalition; xeno-cultural images; interoperability*

1. INTRODUCTION

In military teams, relations are developed in time and there is a strong interdependence based on trust. The tasks of the teams are complex, it is a stress environment, and there are multiple opportunities to test different situations, together with the members of the military team.

The trust is a process, a built emotion (the same as loyalty), that you have it with respect to individuals and organization.

Trust concept comprises psychological and socio-cultural aspects. Building the trust is based on: (1) Prediction towards the way the others are behaving in the future in relation to us, an aspect that is based on our cultural, psychological and social evolution, on previous experiences, the emotional status in which we are, our own interests but also the way motivation of the other persons is perceived; (2) Prediction towards the way we will behave in the future in relation to the others. In this case we can choose an analytic behavior, rational, in which the advantages of such a kind of behavior are evaluated permanently and the dictated behavior for the persons with whom we are interacting, or we can choose a relational behavior, based on the knowledge we have in relation with the "category" from which they belong.

We can define the trust as being:

...a psychological state that manifests itself in the behaviors towards others is based on the expectations made upon behaviors of these others, and on the perceived motives and intentions in situations entailing risk for the relationship with these others (Costa *et al.*, 2001).

2. THE TRUST AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT, PERSONAL AND/OR OF A CATEGORY

It is important to make the distinction in between trust and cooperation. We can cooperate also without trust in the team partners, but the trust is increasing the motivation to cooperate.

The need for trust is coming from the necessity to reduce the situational complexity. We need, as social human beings, to believe as the others have also constant, positive motivations towards us, in order to reduce expectations that we have towards the behavior of others. When we are referring to trust, we approach the aspect from two perspectives: the one of a direct report, personal (in which trust is built on interrelationship and validation of common experiences) and the one of trust that is functioning based on "category" in which that specific person is identified.

2.1. Trust as a personal construct. Acquired through direct interaction, this is built gradually, through accumulation of information. The

respective features are those which predicts and generate future behavior. The superior status is represented by the degree in which the others will fulfill our expectations in every situation, according to the attributes that we attached to their behavior. In the united groups with values and common objectives, with a high degree of interpersonal trust, a case in which there is an identification of the individual with the group (for example: US Marines).

Constants that are appearing in the studies related to *trust built through direct interaction* are the following: *time* in order to develop a common history and to observe the predominant behavior, *motivations, emotions and the exchange of relevant information*. The trust has three big components: *professional competence* (with three aspects: knowledge at the expert level, technical abilities and the daily performance [Barber, 1983]), *integrity and good will*. All those aspects are important in building the trust inside the teams.

To those three components are added factors related to the interaction process: communication, common values and objectives, identification of cultural similarities, etc.

2.2. The trust as a construct of a category.

An individual belonging to a certain category is offering for the members of another group the perception of trust based on the information they got with respect to that specific group (ethnicity religion, social role, position on the leadership scale, cultural context, etc.). It is in general the way to approach of the relationships in the initial phases of the multinational interaction.

The increase of the morale, common continuous professional training, progress stimulation and rewarding the success got are strong motivators in building the trust in the values of the organization and of the group to which they belong.

Situational uncertainty and stress, specific to the theatre of operations and crisis situations, are changing dramatically the level of trust.

3. BUILDING THE TRUST THROUGH COMMON TRAINING

Soldiers are having multiple chances to be promoted in the carrier, to train themselves and to develop, if they want that. The loyal chance is the main element in the motivation for the continuous training of the soldiers from the developed armies. The condition is that those chances to be correct, and the „Military carrier guide” and National Legislation also have to be applied correctly.

People are normally feeling not motivated and they think it is unjust when their needs and rights are ignored, and the circulation in both ways of the value „trust” is affected.

Adjacent to the military and specific training, in Romania, the efforts to consolidate the trust in the personnel capabilities have been objectified in the establishment of the Linguistic Training Centers, followed by the establishment of the Distance Learning Department in 2004. The third step in the training effort was represented by the establishment of the Simulation Training Center that has a major role in the common training, standardized of NATO soldiers. All those attempts in training are creating the feeling of belonging to a trained organization and also that of trust in the possibility to accomplish professional roles.

Expanding the content of the training courses and of the university programmes to include cultural competence issue and the leadership in multinational environment is representing the permanent improvement of doctrine and is a preoccupation of our Ministry of Defense. All of these are offering the initial image of the preparation and of the competence the soldier is having and the foundation on which are applied the communication programmes that generate trust, orientation towards objective and offers information about the niche on which the soldier can maximize with efficiency this competence.

3.1. Common experience acquired in *common exercises, in peacetime*, is relevant in the trust building process. Living together for extended periods of time in a common environment is creating conditions to manifest the basic individual behaviors and the learning through experimentation and exercise.

Testing the trust and of the interoperability inside extended multinational teams, *for a long period*, has been achieved in the first German-Nederland Army Corps (von Hagen *et al.*, 2006:15-51). The results of the study are relevant, because they consist the only research document conducted with the participation of NATO countries, for a ten years period. 1995-2005. René Moelker, Joseph Soeters and Ulrich von Hagen focused on two well-known hypotheses of claiming that *the frequency of the contacts*, and *mutual trust* are likely to facilitate the sympathy feelings in between the cultures. It is a case study on collaboration in peacetime.

Data is demonstrating that soldiers of both nations merged in their sympathy feelings and additionally the two hypotheses have been

confirmed. In general, the reciprocal images of the Dutch and of the Germans were positive (Soeters, 2006). The Germans and the Dutch that gave interviews have declared that *they had trust* the others, especially on the *professional side*.

The development of trust is depending on factors related to individuals, to category on which they belong, on situational risk factors and on the stress level of the personnel of the multinational military teams.

3.2. The environment that is characteristic to the theatre of operations is remaining the framework in which is tested the *validity of trust construct* in peacetime. Extrapolating the experience of German-Nederland cooperation *in the war environment*, the stress, different financial benefits, unbalanced distribution of the missions, the command provided by a single nation, have generated dramatic effects over the trust in between the mission partners, the same ones as in Munster. It is the clear proof that common training does not automatically generates trust and interoperability.

The issue of building the trust in between the coalition partners is complex. Elements like: personnel rotation, the busy geographic context or a very dispersed one, cultural differences, differences in education, religion, professional formation, in between the values of the national cultural dimensions, national military rules, the personal values, age, gender etc. are variables that are affecting the trust degree in between the coalition partners.

4. LEADERSHIP AND TRUST

Gail L. Zellman, Joanna Z. Heilbrun, Conrad Schmidt and Carl Builder have characterized the essential elements of the military culture as being

conservative, deep rooted in history and traditions, based on group loyalty, on conformity and orientated towards obeying the superiors (Zellman *et al.*, 1993:369)

Military organizations are “producing” individuals in which you have to trust because it can come a moment when you have to entrust your own life. When the organization is voluntarily divided in small groups, then we are talking about personnel trust level and not about the organizational one, and the fault is the negative influence of the leadership.

In general, the process of building a minimum level of trust is taking 5-8 months. Taking into

consideration this fact, it has been appreciated that the mission period for the leaders of certain ranks to be based on the importance of the position occupied, as follows: the commander of the mission to be rotated every two years, the heads of the structures every year, and the fighting units every six months. Knowledge and mutual trust in between the leader and his team is important, that is why the leaders from essential positions are accompanied by their own teams and in bigger execution structures (companies, platoons, etc.) they are deployed in the theatre of operations as they are working in the peacetime establishment. When the rotational periods are of 4-6 months, the level of trust is based only on the professional trust. The interaction in KAIA military Base is an excellent example of professional trust based on standards and procedures.

Trust cannot be dictated, is depending on the environment and on the context. In environments where there is a trust deficit, the leader is the one that is influencing the relations. In building the trust process, the leader has to decide what is better for the group on long time perspective and how much can be extended “the safety circle”.

Under the pressure of the political factor and of the survival instinct, a leader can make certain decisions that may affect the trust inside the organization, affecting also the reputation of the structure. Using such a kind of conduct each member of the organization will choose to protect himself/herself affecting dramatically the trust, the accomplishment of the mission and the entire culture of the organization.

The leadership style and the environment to which the members of the team belong are generating different trust degrees and kind of interrelationships.

GLOBE Study is offering a scientific understanding framework of the way in which leadership is exercised in those 61 studied states (62 from the cultural dimension perspective but, 61 from that of leadership style). Analysis generated 21 statistical scales of leadership that have been reduced to the final, to six styles of leadership. Those are: (1) The leadership style orientated on performance, named „*charismatic, based on values*” by the researchers in the GLOBE Study. This style is presenting the following characteristics: high standards, commitment, innovation, the support and inspiration of the team that is leading; (2) The style orientated towards the team: is cultivating proud, loyalty and collaboration among the members of the organization. The values of such a style of

leadership are cohesion and the common aim to accomplish the objectives. (3) The participative style: that encourages the opinions of the others in taking and implementing decisions, is comfortable with the delegation of the responsibilities and with the equality concept; (4) The human style: leadership is performed with generosity and compassion, patience, support, and preoccupation for the well being of the members of the team; (5) The autonomous style is an independent one, individual, and focused on his own interest; (6) The auto protective style (or for the protection of the group): position, procedures and rules are

important, a non-authentic behavior to save the appearances, concentrated on the safety and personal security of the group.

In the following table are presented those six styles of leadership and their positioning on the intensity scale, of the countries comprising the ten groups. The importance of those ten styles of leadership is special, because is facilitating the understanding of the understanding of the interaction inside military organization and the frictions that are generated from different style of interaction in between the leader and the teams.

Table no. 1. „Societal groups and the style of leadership”, Robert J. House (2004)

Orientation towards performance	Orientation towards the team	Participative	Human	Autonomous	Auto or group protective
<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>
Anglo	SE Asian	Germanic	SE Asian	Germanic	Middle East
Germanic	Confucian	Anglo	Anglo	Eastern European	Confucian
Nordic	Latin	Nordic	African	Confucian	SE Asian
SE Asian	American		Confucian	Nordic	Latin American
L. European	Eastern			SE Asian	Eastern European
L. American	European			Anglo	
Confucian	African	Latin	Germanic	African	African
African	Latin	European	Middle East	Middle East	Latin European
E. European	European	Latin	Latin American	Latin European	
	Nordic	American	Eastern European	Latin American	
	Anglo	African			
	Middle East				
Middle East	Germanic	Eastern European	Latin European		Anglo
		SE Asian	Nordic		Germanic
		Confucian			Nordic
		Middle East			
<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>
Orientation towards performance	Orientation towards the team	Participative	Human	Autonomous	Auto or group protective

High hierarchy and orientation towards obeying the rules and military regulations (a feature of the Latin Group), elitism and special respect paid to the position (a feature of the Anglo-Saxon Group) and excessive orientation towards the accomplishment of the objectives to which is added uncertainty avoidance and the exaggeration of rules (a feature of the Americans) are only few of the aspects of the military culture that generate situational uncertainty and mistrust and can represent other efficient instruments for the cultivation of trust if there is an area „commonly accepted”.

Power and responsibility are notions related in between them. Those who do not have

responsibilities are not motivated. Structures that are positively evolving are those, in which the behaviors and responsibilities are quantifiable, in which the leaders of the subunits have the proper power to the position and of the level of competence. In such a kind of structure, the information and experience is distributed to the team based on the principle “need to know” and is encouraged the solution and ideas circulation.

In general, the leaders are feeling comfortable with the idea of power but positive evolution inside the “infinite game” is possible only when there is a balance in between the distribution of power, responsibility, trust in the mission of the

organization and when the people are representing the top priority for the leadership and for the organization, on a long term.

In multinational groups it is important that members to understand in a unitarian way the fighting mission. The differences in understanding the missions (being fighting, humanitarian, advise or training) put in danger also the vision, the planning and the execution as the result of the intervention. In units/groups where there is not a solid foundation for trust, in which the language, the leadership style, competencies and skills, the utilitarian system from which they are coming the soldiers and the commanders are different, and the efficiency of that specific unit is reduced. The groups established ad hoc have reduced chances to survive in fighting, because they are not operating as a cohesive unit.

5. THE RELATION IN BETWEEN THE PRESENCE OF THE FEMALES IN THE MILITARY TEAMS AND TRUST

The role of the females in societies has been clearly defined, based on the reproduction function, sensibility and the care for the family.

This seems to be in antagonism with the integration and the trust of the group that is creating the idea that the introduction of women in the fighting teams is attracting a fracture in the cohesion of the group. The armies are traditionally conservative entities that do not respond to those changes in gender rapidly. How the small fighting unit can be affected by the admittance of the women among them? This question is focusing our attention to the following one: How the trust, cohesion and sexuality are interacting inside the multinational Coalition, especially in the small units like for example Special Forces? *Hyper-masculinity* item has a central role in sub-military culture, because has a link with motivation and cohesion.

Physical test are representing the first barrier in the selection process and in the integration of the women in fighting units. Impossibility to maintain the level of effort is perceived by the other members of the group as being poverty, a dilution of capabilities. A British study on this issue inside several armies, a research conducted in 2010, has established that in the countries where there is such a kind of option, only 1% of the women that are applying for positions in fighting units have fulfilled the physical tests. The studies related to the integration of women in different armies concluded that exists the possibility that such a kind of integration on the cohesion of the group.

After 2010, once with the revision of the policy related to the employment of women in British fighting units, there was the recommendation to be stopped, because there was a „potential risk to maintain the erosion of the mixed tactical groups engaged in fighting close operations of a high risk” (MoD, 2010). The danger is coming from different directions: the disruptive relations and the competition in between men for the attention of women. All these elements are leading to the decrease of trust and cohesion. Despite these, the reality of the theatre of operations has demonstrated that well thought personnel policies can achieve a harmonization of the contribution of the two genders in the operational process.

The reality of the theatre of operations proved that women are integrating well into the military teams, they are not generating major frictions inside the members of the team and they have a special role in gathering information especially in the very traditional countries.

6. TRUST – SECURITY OF THE PERSONNEL AND THE INTERACTION WITH LOCAL POPULATION

In the theater of operations one of the basic conditions to establish a real and efficient communication in between the personnel of the mission and the locals is by personal trust. The bigger threats on which the members of the tactical teams are exposed are leading indirectly, with unable to carry out their actions and to win the trust of the tribal leaders. This is happening because the force protection issue related to the teams is related to the presence of the armored vehicles, weapons and other subunits that are providing force protection. There is a mandatory condition generated by the personnel safety policies, but this is getting in contradiction with the expected way to interact of the population.

It's a two-way road, in which each side has survival rules. The interest of developing the trust exists on both sides but the possible effects of the actions resulting from cultural differences and/or the manifestation of extremist beliefs permanently threaten this objective.

Variables that are influencing the trust – case studies. The qualitative method used was **the case study** in which I used participative and non-participative observation. The first case study was conducted on two Romanian contingents made up of staff, and the second on a permanent structure of the General Headquarters of the Resolute Support

Mission composed of multinational personnel. The research was conducted in between 2013-2017.

The instrument used was „The linear knowledge and harmonization model of cultural interaction” (Palaghia, 2018).

In this material I will refer only to the observations and conclusions related to the trust variable. The case studies were extended to the cultural differences in the theater of operations.

Observation No. 1: The level of experience and of professional competence on which there are added the level of linguistic competence is affecting the quality of the process and the content of the communication. It is representing the basis for the multinational operations. „*The level of linguistic knowledge*” is the most important in the interrelationship process in multinational coalition. In this material I will refer only to the observations and conclusions related to the trust variable. The case studies were extended to the cultural differences in the theater of operations.

There were elements noted in the observation process that confirmed that some Romanian military, but also military of some southeast European armies felt marginalized in the process of operational planning or elaboration of conceptual documents, and their explanation was that

probably the talking rhythm and/or the level of knowledge of English language, especially the level of understanding and communication in writing are not at the expected level by natives, on which is added the deficiencies in knowing the SOPs.

There is a great desire to learn the procedures and increase the contribution to the conception process, efforts recognized and appreciated by the military of other contributing nations, but the fighting environment does not provide the time needed for the linguistic details and the procedure to be learned. The participating military must be fully trained when they reach the multinational structures. Only this way I can benefit from the trust of our partners. In the majority national structures, the nations that are minority have the tendency of separation and they will feel excluded, not used to the real capacity and, finally, frustrated.

Observation No. 2. Working culture. It represents the manifestation of the two cultural aspects: the orientation towards the achievement of the objectives versus the maintenance of social relations. There are big differences between how to perceive and apply this variable between nations, generating frustrations, altering trust between team members or between them and their leaders.

Observation No. 3. The way in which „strong nations” are watching „poor nations”.

The common history and the feeling that they belong to powerful nations induce a certain attitude among the military belonging to different nations. This attitude changes during the mission. At first, the military interacts openly, amicably, diplomatically. The stress level being low, the masking capacity is high. Time, together with trust (or lack thereof) and respect (or lack thereof) towards the skills of the coalition partners, acts in shaping group behavior. If gaps in communication are added to them, then the phenomenon of separation occurs. If, on the contrary the linguistic level, the preparation and the operational experience, the cultural knowledge, the respect and the confidence are combined, the phenomenon of integration in the group appears, with positive effects both on the psychic of the military and on the efficiency of the group.

Observation No. 4 “Common” History it can generate feelings of distrust and animosity between contingents. The importance of this aspect was among the first introduced in the process of preparing the premise and preparing the leaders. Knowing the ‘sensitivity’ of this type of interrelation in the coalition has led to the taking of additional precautions regarding the common areas of action of the contingents, a careful selection of the groups that provide certain areas and / or participate in common operations. For example, the fairly recent common history of conflicts between Turks and Greeks can be considered a source of mistrust. There is a high probability that, in stressful situations, any motive will be used as an outlet. Preparing the premise, operating in multinational structures, dividing by areas of responsibility, informal meetings are just some of the elements that generate balance in this aspect of collaboration.

Observation No. 5. Belonging to different political, social and military systems has generated differences in procedures, technique, very different values of the "distance to power" dimension, differences that affect the degree of trust. The consequence of the training of the personnel of different nationalities in totalitarian systems (in particular, the Eastern-European bloc) or long war zones (Afghanistan) has led to the development of a certain type of behavior that we have called „adaptive/survival behavior”.

The consequences of this behavior are: lack of trust in partners, respect only for people with special military skills (strong leaders), caution in statements, functioning in groups already known

and 'verified', the desire to meet the job requirements only as much as needed without initiatives, without making any effort to stand out. This attitude generates frustration at the level of the coalition partners who expect an involved and active participation. The knowledge gained from grouping nations participating in multinational missions by categories, according to Geert Hofstede's cultural values and dimensions, indeed facilitates easier interaction between contingents and can lead to friction avoidance and increased mission efficiency, but it is not a condition sufficient.

Observation No.6. Civil-military relation.

The deficit of trust lies in the fact that the command and subordination lines are completely different, the working procedures and interaction with the local population are different, the purpose of the mission is perceived differently, there is a wealth of information whose content is not intended to be known by one side or the other.

Observation No. 7. The „Lead Nation” Concept is proving to be the most effective approach to multinational missions. The validity of this concept was verified both through the case study conducted on the basis of KAIA and in Mazar al Sharif, Herat. The clear definition of the areas of responsibility, the unique management, the unique procedures prove to be the ways of diminishing the effects of the distrust within the coalition.

Observation No. 8. Respect – a component of trust. Respect has at least three dimensions: towards the uniform, with respect to one another and respect for oneself. The low endowment, the poor way of wearing the uniform and the attitude when it is worn is elements that show disrespect to the army of which the military is part.

The military must respect each other, regardless of gender, religion, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. Each military must respect itself through education, personal development, behavior. Everything is related to respect for the uniform, comrades and their own person. Lack of physical training, overweight are signs of disrespect for the soldier profession and are associated with laziness and lack of enthusiasm.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The trust and cohesion of the team results from the positive influence of/on its members and the combination of at least three factors: competence (members and leader), care (towards one's own person, team members and organization-mission and purpose) and communication in within the

team. When a team is cohesive, the level of trust is high. The major frictions in the interrelation of theaters mainly reside in: cultural identity and differences of values, conditions of accommodation and feeding, codes of conduct, differences between the systems of management and the forms of exercise of the discipline, differences in terms of beliefs political, wage differences and other benefits, the nature of the relationships between officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers, how women are viewed in different cultures, differences in military training and experience in the international environment and theater of operations, differences in goals, staff turnover too fast.

Different ways to solve the military conflicts (by fighting or through a humanitarian approach), force protection, accommodation facilities, personnel policies, the way to communicate, can generate also frictions inside the Coalition.

The level of linguistic competence, experience at the international environment, and the availability of the native speakers to adjust the rhythm, to formulate the ideas in a simple manner are factors that are influencing the communication inside the coalition. The stress level and the type of the group (mixed or a nation) are imposing the pace of communication.

For the personnel that is functioning in the military context, having similar values of sub-military cultures is difficult to accept opinions, the role, and the importance of some civilian organizations. The main problem here is the different way in which the subject „*classification of the information and the way is distributed*” is understood by the two types of organizations.

All those elements are affecting the trust dimension inside multinational military organizations. The strategies to achieve an acceptable level of cooperation inside the coalition known in sociology, separation and integration, are functioning in the theatre of operations. Military organizations are functioning over extended periods of time and together are developing an isomorphism resulted from common experiences (experiential isomorphism), through the standardization of policies, doctrines, resources, training and programs, all these leading to the increase of military interoperability.

Dividing the areas of action based on contingents that belong to the same cultural group is a viable solution that reduces frictions in stress situations, in the theatre of operations alongside the uniformity of the technologies used are eliminating

the communication deficiencies and are increasing the level of trust in between the soldiers.

Extended common training generates cultural knowledge and is strengthening trust in between the soldiers. Together with a certain knowledge level of a language at the „professional level”, these elements are facilitating the cultivation of trust.

Essential elements of the military cultures such as: ceremonials and etiquette, discipline, professional ethos, cohesion and esprit de corps have been identified as existing in all the armies of the coalition. They are representing a cultivation instrument of the esprit de corps and the trust inside the Coalition. Cultivation of trust has multiple effects control exercised over the members of the team, and is creating conditions for creative thinking, is facilitating communication and cooperation, and is reducing the conflict level inside the teams.

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