

**THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE
TRANSFER FOR EFFICIENT DEFENCE AND SECURITY SYSTEM**

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Abstract: The vast sociopolitical and cultural changes that swept Europe in the eighteenth century revolutionized the way knowledge was perceived in many fields of society. The new scientific discoveries found such practical use in creating new tools for war that significantly reshaped the western understanding and appreciation of knowledge as essential for the power of the state. Since the early nineteenth century most practitioners of war have realized that the war is not a game of chance, but involve a good deal of knowledge, learning and practice. The security system of any country must be observed as a living organism that needs constant adaptation to the ever changing operational environment. The practice shows that countries that tend to develop inert defence without capacities to adapt to rapid changes in the environment, one day may fail to survive such changes. Necessary for survival of a country is that its security and defence system continuously learn and develop. The existence of an organizational learning and studying of the past conflicts and understanding the operational environment through analysing subjective, not just objective patterns, is crucial for producing practical solutions in the area of defence which is vital to the state. The modern warfare and contemporary asymmetric threats made the planning, preparing and execution of security operations on all levels one of the most complex and most difficult human activities. It takes a lot of learning, obtaining and processing of information to be able to cope with the challenges of contemporary security threats. Although the security and defence system of a country usually learns best from its own mistakes, it is better to rely on learning from other's mistakes. The power of obtaining knowledge in certain organization is heavily influenced from its organizational culture, and in the context of organizational learning in the defence, the words of Sir Basil Liddell Hart were not far from the truth: "The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind is to get an old one out."¹²⁷ Thus, knowledge can be particularly useful if the practitioners develop a critical mindset as a base for thinking, through applying the multidisciplinary approach in learning and understanding the causality of actions and events in the international politics. It is obvious that the strongest defence systems of some countries in the world are successful because they pay far more attention to study the past experiences, wars and campaigns. Without a critical analysis of the knowledge of the past, one cannot make a reliable and realistic assessment for future threats and conflicts in order to make necessary preparations to build up the defence capabilities. The military forces of any country have the biggest potential to provide security. Those militaries that practice war more often are better at it. Dealing with any threat more often contributes to achieving a better understanding and improves the readiness for the next move. Therefore, the country security and defence elements not just learn continually, but also do not create generational gaps of knowledge. Only in real crisis the personnel, equipment and doctrine are put to a test. As a result of such practical application of knowledge, their quality is confirmed, adjusted or changed.

Keywords: knowledge, learning, defence, security system.

**ВАЖНОСТА НА ОРГАНИЗАЦИСКОТО УЧЕЊЕ И ТРАНСФЕРОТ НА ЗНАЕЊЕ
ЗА ЕФИКАСНОСТА НА ОДБРАНБЕНО БЕЗБЕДНОСНИОТ СИСТЕМ**

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¹²⁷ Evans, D. *War: A Matter of Principles*. London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1997, p.93.

Резиме: Големите социо-политички и културни промени што ја зафатија Европа во XVIII век револуционерно го променија начинот на гледање на знаењето во многу области на општеството. Новите научни откритија кои најдоа практична употреба во создавање на нови алатки за војување значително го обликуваа западното сфаќање и вреднување на знаењето како од суштинско значење за моќта на државата. Уште од почетокот на XIX век повеќето практичари на војната сфатија дека војната не е само игра на среќа, туку вклучува и добар дел на знаење, учење и пракса. Безбедносниот систем на една држава мора да се набљудува како жив организам кој треба константно да се прилагодува на оперативното опкружување. Практиката покажала дека држава кој развива инертна одбрана, без капацитет за прилагодување на брзите промени во опкружувањето, не успева секогаш да ги преживее промените. Неопходно за опстанок на секоја земја е нејзиниот безбедносен систем постојано да учи и да се развива. Постојењето на организациско учење и институционално проучување на изминатите кризи и конфликти, сфаќање на оперативното опкружување и субјективноста, не само објективноста, дополнително придонесуваат за нудење на реални решенија за прашања од витално значење за државата. Модерното војување и современите асиметрични закани го направија планирањето, подготовката и спроведувањето на безбедносните операции на сите нивоа една од најсложените и најтешки човековите активности. Потребно е многу учење, стекнување и процесирање на информации за да се справиме со комплексноста на современите безбедносни закани. Иако обично безбедносниот систем и одбраната на една држава најдобро учи од своите грешки, секогаш е подобро да се учи од туѓите грешки. Моќта на стекнување на знаење во одредена институција е под силно влијание на нејзината организациска култура, а во контекст на институционално учење во областа на одбраната, зборовите на Басил Лидел Харт не се далеку од вистината: "Единствено потешко од ставање на нова идеја во војничкиот ум е прво да се извади старата."¹²⁸ Така, знаењето може да биде особено корисно ако практичарите развијат критичен ментален склоп како основа за размислување, преку примена на мултидисциплинарен пристап во процесот на учење и разбирање на каузалноста на дејствијата и настаните во меѓународната политика. Очигледно е дека најсилните одбранбени системи на некои земји во светот се успешни затоа што посветуваат повеќе внимание на изучување на минатите искуства, војни и кампањи. Без критичка анализа на минатото, не може да се направи сигурна и реална проценка за идните закани и конфликти, а со цел да се направат потребните подготовки за градење на соодветни капацитети за одбрана. Вооружените сили на секоја држава имаат најголем потенцијал за да овозможат безбедност. Оние војски кои ја практикуваат војната почесто, се подобри во тоа. Справување со различни закани често придонесува за подобро разбирање и подобрување на подготвеноста за следниот потег. На тој начин, одбранбено безбедносните елементи на државата не само што постојано учат, туку немаат генерациски јаз на знаење. Само во вистинска криза персоналот, опремата и доктрината може да се стават на тест. Како резултат на таквата практична примена на знаењата, нивниот квалитет може да се потврди, прилагоди или промени.

Клучни зборови: Знаење, учење, одбрана, безбедносен систем.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary security trend of a mixture of all possible threats defined as hybridity is complicating already complex problem of providing security and stability in a given society. Solving problems and making decisions to confront dynamic adversaries such as terrorist organizations became a priority in the security studies across the globe. In such an unpredictable environment and unlimited flow of information, it is important more than ever to have a knowledge advantage over the potential adversary.¹²⁹ The application of knowledge is particularly important in the military organization because the quality of the national security depends on its effectiveness.¹³⁰ While the goal of the modern technology is to reduce unpredictability and facilitate the functioning of the defence and security system, it imposed a requirement for more educated personnel and greater knowledge management. This pattern started earlier with the era of thermodynamic warfare and

¹²⁸ Evans. *War: A Matter of Principles*. p.93.

¹²⁹ McIntyre S.G., Gauvin M. & Waruszynski B. *Knowledge Management in the Military Context*. Canadian Military Journal, (Spring 2003), p.35.

¹³⁰ Watson, C. A. *Military Education: A Reference Handbook*. Connecticut. Westport: Praeger Security International, (2007), p.xii.

proceeded today, even more in the era of network-centric warfare.¹³¹ To cope with the asymmetric threats from both state and non-state actors, all organizations that provide defence and security must become organizations that learn, obtain and transfer knowledge.

Evidence that one organization is learning and growing is if it makes groundbreaking paradigm shifts from time to time.¹³² Making doctrinal breakthroughs is healthy for any organization and necessary for adaptation to the environment. The knowledge management, including the transfer of knowledge must occasionally receive new inputs through the educational process to allow organisational growth. Otherwise, knowledge may become obsolete and the organization that functions based on it may become less relevant to respond to contemporary requirements. There are many examples of obsolete armies and defence systems that are not prepared to counter the new threats because they are inert toward knowledge management. When damage is done, usually the response of the politicians is that the threat was “asymmetrical”, thus unpredictable. Whenever a defence system fails, the blame goes to hybrid and asymmetric nature of the threat as an excuse for unpredictability. This is why the speed that the knowledge should be processed and transferred in a defence and security organizations like the military is essential for achieving agility and adaptability.¹³³ While some organizations in a society does not necessarily race to broaden their capabilities to a maximum, all defence and security organizations tend to learn and apply knowledge faster and better.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

Everybody understands that knowledge is power. However, certain knowledge can become obsolete if does not find its practical application in time and place when it is still relevant. This is particularly true in the field of defence and security studies, because the threats in the contemporary operational environments constantly change, mutate and grow. The responses and solutions in the area of the security and defence are most of the time an action-reaction relation. Knowledge is usually applied after something or someone threatens the state's security policies. This is due to the fact that providing security and defence is one of the most expensive activities that drain the states' budget and in most cases, politicians are reluctant to spend extra money for defence based on intelligence assumptions however they are realistic.

Because such pattern is repeated in many countries, especially the military organizations all over the world tend to develop their own system of collecting, processing and transferring knowledge. All organizations that deal with defence and security matters have a tradition of studying their past actions to learn lessons and prevent making the same mistakes in future.¹³⁴ They are the most typical knowledge - dependent organizations that must constantly grow to survive, even in peace. In his studies (on war), Carl von Clausewitz established the premier paradigm of the importance of knowledge in the military organization. He suggested that in the war matters, it is more important how to think than what to think and claimed that military leaders must have an ‘intellectual instinct’¹³⁵ to absorb the objective knowledge that is useful for understanding the phenomenon of war.¹³⁶ Since Clausewitz, all modern military thinkers accepted that military professionals must learn and obtain knowledge to be able to make the right decisions. To explain the uncertainty and chance in the complex system as war, Clausewitz often used the metaphor of the ‘fog of war’,¹³⁷ where only through learning, knowledge and experience one could reduce it. In today's security environment of asymmetric and hybrid threats, this metaphor is more relevant than ever. Knowledge is crucial for victory.

¹³¹ Bousquet, A. J. *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity*. Columbia University Press, (2011).

¹³² For more on the concept of paradigm shift, see: Kuhn, T. S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press, (1996).

¹³³ Dalton, R.A. *Knowledge Transfer for the Military Leader*. (2010), p.4.

¹³⁴ Watson. *Military Education: A Reference Handbook*. p.xii.

¹³⁵ Clausewitz, C. V. *On War*. Translation by J.J. Graham, revised by F.N.Maude, abridged by Louise Willmot, Wordsworth Editions Limited, (1997), p.99.

¹³⁶ Echevarria II, A. J. *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*. New York: Oxford University Press, (2007), p.12.

¹³⁷ Angstrom, J. & Widen, J.J. *Contemporary Military Theory: The dynamics of war*. New York: Routledge, (2015), p.107.

Every defence and security system in the world, as no other organization, constantly updates its knowledge capacities, develops and publishes new doctrines, manuals and educational materials. It represents an ultimate learning organization where from the first day in boots is providing education and mentoring for its personnel. Beside this explicit, written knowledge, a typical military organization has also a tacit knowledge that is important for stimulating innovation and competitiveness.¹³⁸ The method how this tacit knowledge is maintained and transferred to the next generation as explicit knowledge are different for each organization, and mostly depends on its culture.¹³⁹

3. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN A MILITARY ORGANIZATION

The defence and security system of a country is an organisation that responds to threats in the operational environment. It needs constant knowledge management to quickly adapt and counter the new threats. The knowledge management in a military organization is the “strategic approach to achieving defence objectives by leveraging the value of collective knowledge through the processes of creating, gathering, organizing, sharing and transferring knowledge into action.”¹⁴⁰ The knowledge management in every organization is necessary for advantage against the competition,¹⁴¹ and in the military organization it means urge to perform better than the adversary.

The concept of knowledge management in the military organization is different from state to state. It is heavily influenced by the overall culture in the particular state. Some societies are more open and less authoritarian than others that have embedded traditional understanding for norms and values and more hierarchical structures. In the military organization, after knowledge is obtained or created it needs to be transferred in direct communication with the recipient. The key for successful knowledge management is the tactical level leadership because the personal communication has an important role in transferring knowledge through coaching and mentoring.¹⁴² The organization grows if the employees are managed properly through leadership and there are no better leaders in a society than the military experienced and trained leaders.¹⁴³ The experience is a vital resource that can be best transferred through socialization.

The culture of the nation is the first aspect that shapes the way how one nation is organizing its defence. Tradition and experiences learned from the past wars embedded in the collective memory of the nation determines how it will prepare for future threats. There are many examples when due to the poor interpretation of past events or selective and biased learning, the defence and security system produces false conclusions, resulting in inadequate strategies and policies. The Military organization has its own mindset, and traditionally tends to develop an educational culture because it needs continuous development and adjustment to changes. Organizational learning is more than a sum of individual learning, because it is a system that constantly accumulates knowledge, even if the contributors are no longer in the organization.¹⁴⁴ This is particularly true for a military organization that traditionally learns and grows from myths and past experiences of former members.

The organizational knowledge in the military generates innovation through the process of transferring the tacit knowledge into an explicit knowledge.¹⁴⁵ Although the large organizations like the militaries depend on the physical sources to transfer knowledge, the real knowledge is always primarily transferred through sharing

¹³⁸ Şensoy S.E., Keskin A. & Orhan M. E. *Knowledge Management in Military Organizations: Applications of Knowledge Creation and Knowledge Transfer*. Turkish Army War College, (2015), p.21.

¹³⁹ Şensoy et al. *Knowledge Management in Military Organizations*. p.21.

¹⁴⁰ McIntyre et al. *Knowledge Management in the Military Context*. p.38.

¹⁴¹ Goh, S. G. *Managing Effective Knowledge Transfer: An Integrative Framework and*

Some Practice Applications. Journal of Knowledge Management, (2002), 6(1), p.23-30.

¹⁴² Şensoy et al. *Knowledge Management in Military Organizations*. p.22.

¹⁴³ Özlen, M.K. *Successful Skill Transfer: Military Service Experience and Company Performance*. European Researcher, (2014), Vol.(79), No 7-2, p.1359.

¹⁴⁴ Weitlaner, T. *Organizational learning processes in international strategic alliances*. Diploma Thesis, (1997), p.53.

¹⁴⁵ McIntyre et al. *Knowledge Management in the Military Context*. p.36.

experiences as an important part of the learning organizational culture.¹⁴⁶ In a military organization applying knowledge transfer is also necessary for avoiding knowledge gaps between generations by losing experience, but also necessary for keeping pace with the internal and external changes. This refers especially for transferring the tacit knowledge which is not written, thus needed to be transferred in daily communication, during face to face interactions among personnel.¹⁴⁷

The most common transfer of knowledge is through organizing combat readiness tests and joint exercises.¹⁴⁸ Although it is a simulated environment, practical application of knowledge and skills are best tested when the organization is brought outside the comfort zone. It is well proven fact that the defence and security organizations that exercise more are better at identifying gaps in the system. Koskinen says that the presence of an organizational learning is a proof for adaptive organization, one which "is able to sense changes in signals from its environment (both internal and external) and adapt accordingly."¹⁴⁹

Every military develops its unique doctrine, which translate knowledge into practice. The doctrine also provides a framework for organizational development. To be efficient, it must be suitable and feasible in a given context. Richard Betts says that "old knowledge is as important as new", and even if it is rejected due to organizational changes, its importance should be understood why it worked in a certain historical context.¹⁵⁰ This kind of understanding why things were done as they did is especially inherent in the military organizations.

4. INTEROPERABILITY WITH THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY

The organisational learning and knowledge management in any organization is not an isolated process. It is driven and profoundly influenced by the overall educational system of the state. Ultimately all members of the military are a product of the national educational process. The approaches toward knowledge are projected to all levels throughout society, including the military organization as the core of the defence system.

However, the threats in the contemporary operational environment imposed development of collective security organizations like NATO. This is an additional challenge to the knowledge management in the national defence system. In this paradigm, the military organization of a country becomes part of a much larger organization that although is made of many different nations, it tends to establish its own educational system. For example, there are many NATO schools and centres of excellence that although dispersed in many countries, conduct knowledge management using formal joint doctrine.

If the strategic end state is a long term partnership or membership in the collective security system, the knowledge management of the national defence system must become tuned with that systems' educational processes. While tactical leadership is important for internal knowledge transfer, the strategic leadership is important for synchronization and consistency with the collective security system in the field of education.

As part of the collective security system, the military organization exchange knowledge through participation in schools and centres, conducting joint exercises, and deployments in coalition operations. While the first one is obtaining of theoretical knowledge, the second and the third are application of knowledge in practice. Especially conducting real operations is the ultimate test for the quality of the organisational learning and knowledge transfer, but also a test for achieving interoperability with the partners. In order to demonstrate its relevance, a military organization must grow and develop following the trends of the larger international organization.

¹⁴⁶ Davenport T. H. & Prusak, L. *Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know*. Harvard College, (1998), p.96.

¹⁴⁷ Hasnain, S. S. *A Few Good Knowledge Transfer Mechanisms: Keys to Successful Military Operations*. Archives of Business Research, (2016), 3(4), p.2.

¹⁴⁸ Hasnain. *A Few Good Knowledge Transfer Mechanisms*. p.3.

¹⁴⁹ Koskinen, K. U. *Knowledge Production in Organizations: A Processual Autopoietic View*. Springer, (2013), p.101.

¹⁵⁰ Betts, R. K. *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge and Power in American National Security*. New York: Columbia University Press, (2007), p.17.

6. CONCLUSION

The future will be filled with complex and unpredictable regional and global changes that will lean toward disorder. Factors that inevitably intersect and complement like population growth, urbanization, reallocation of resources, sovereignty of states, nationalism, ethnic conflicts, globalization and technology will have destabilizing effects in the field of defence and security. In such operational environment full of unpredictable and interacting threats, countries must create defence and security system that have a holistic approach in solving the asymmetric security challenges. Or in order to solve complex problems, it is necessary to create complex organizations.

Additionally to this challenge, the hybrid and asymmetrical threats combined with the technological developments meant to facilitate problem solving will impose the necessity for more knowledge that is vast, complicated, expensive, and yet time relevant. In today's society, knowledge is not unique and secret anymore. The computer technology and the Internet made the flow of information not just fast, but available to anyone. Security and defence systems have always been in a constant race with the threats they are preparing for. Today the adversaries have also access to the information which might give them an advantage.

The exponential progress of technology and science influenced the human society in many ways, especially providing the most destructive forms of violence. Globalization triggered reshaping of the international relations causing sudden and unpredicted paradigms. As a result, the overall society today goes more often through periodical transformations. The knowledge management in the organizations that provide states' defence and security will be influenced by the cultural aspects, states' educational system, and collective defence knowledge management. The only way to stay relevant is to obtain, analyse, upgrade, share and apply knowledge. The one who does not make progress will lose ground.¹⁵¹

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