



MILITARY LEADERSHIP CULTURE IN THE HUNGARIAN DEFENCE FORCES

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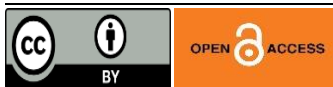
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ABSTRACT

Military leadership culture is one of the most influential factors of military leadership and its quality determines the success of leadership. Its value and strength lie in how much the leader believes in it and how much he can convey it. While leadership thinking is a process aimed at problem solving and finding its most appropriate way in the system of tasks, military leadership culture is a complex phenomenon that includes the values that the leader, together with his or her subordinates, creates or nurtures to achieve his or her own goal and the intent of a higher commander. The evolution of leadership culture in a leader is a lengthy process and the goal is to raise it to an appropriate, effective level. Maturity is the key to the leader being able to consciously communicate common values. This is based on a good leadership culture.

KEYWORDS

military leader, leadership culture, organizational culture, Hungarian Defence Force, military leadership culture models



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INTRODUCTION

In the last thirty years, the Hungarian Defence Forces have changed from a mass army to a volunteer force. It was a very long and complex process, full of challenges. The challenges set demands on the entire force that radically changed everything. The documents governing the operation, the organizational structures and the combat equipment changed, and with them the management systems had to change, which also resulted in a change in military thinking. One of the most significant events of these thirty years has been the accession to NATO.

High demands and new challenges have become a constant part of everyday life. International presence and commitments to missions provided soldiers with an opportunity to gain insight into the operation, organizational structure, and command system of other forces. Operating as a part of multi-national contingents required more than just getting to know the other nations' armed forces. Common principles had to be applied and used and an understanding of each other had to be developed during the operations to such depths as to enable us to accomplish the operational target through joint effort.

When we think of the military, the soldiers serving in it, the technical equipment, the order of procedure, or even its structure will always be part of it. However, what is the main driving force behind this huge organization? Soldiers who contribute the best of their professional skills to everyday tasks, who perform beyond their strength to move resources necessary to achieve organizational objectives, and assume responsibility for carrying out specific tasks. They lead the soldiers entrusted to them, both at home and abroad. These soldiers are the military leaders for whom the last thirty years have been the most burdensome. They had to adapt to all the changes, which required them to constantly learn and change their thinking and behaviour. The radical change in leadership thinking became more and more rapid with the passage of time. Those who could not or did not want to follow this fell out of the system, thus becoming unfit to be a leader in the face of the challenges of the age. Organizational and leadership culture is a determining and influencing factor in the development of leadership thinking.

The aim of my research is to examine the new challenges of troop peacekeeping at the unit and subunit level in the twenty years of joining NATO and in the ongoing ZRINYI 2026 Defence and Force Development Programme. The last twenty years and current transformations give topicality to the research topic I have chosen. In this article, I examine the culture of military leadership. My research method was to gather primary sources, gather background material, conduct empirical studies and comparisons, and review available studies.

1 SHORT HISTORIC OVERVIEW

If we come to think that we recently commemorated the 170th anniversary of the Hungarian Defense Forces, it becomes clear how long a time it is in the life of the military. How many wars, how many revolutions, how many changes, all of which, as influencing factors, had a serious impact not only on the life of the military but also on the life of civil society. In the era of the Austro - Hungarian Empire, traces of the Prussian leadership culture were already present in Hungarian military thinking, which was the cradle of the mission-oriented leadership. (Czegledi,2015)

Until the end of World War II, its presence could be felt in Hungarian military leadership thinking, especially in the Horthy period, but after World War II, due to the presence of Russian influence, the leadership of the mass military began to be incorporated into Hungarian military leadership. During this period, the Ludovika Academy played a major role in the training, education and preparation of military leaders. (Siposné Kecskeméthy – Kalavszky, 2018, p. 359). The Russian influence was special because its traditions also stem from the Prussian culture, but in a uniquely interpreted and supplemented version of it. Subsequently, leaving the Warsaw Pact meant a new beginning that started with the participation of the Hungarian Defense Forces in peace support operations. (Szenes - Kecskeméthy, 2019, p. 487).

A little later, NATO membership meant a major change due to the emergence of new, very high standards. The notion of mass army disappeared; compulsory military service has been completely replaced by voluntary service. The development of the force has been quite varied since the opening. There were very difficult times, others that were increasingly perceived as retrogression, in some cases everybody lived through periods of firefighting. With the advent of new equipment, contribution in growing strengths to a number of international missions and the associated responsibilities, recognition also began to grow at the

international level. The ongoing modernization process, which affects all areas, is more than a milestone in the 170-year history of the Hungarian Defense Forces. (Kecskeméthy, 2018, p. 357). It is a point which our predecessors expected all their lives, an opportunity which results in a very modern military force that is well structured and has good leadership. And, as I wrote earlier, the driving force of this whole process lies in the military leader's activities.

2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP CULTURE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

It is very difficult to find any study or scientific research to define the concept of leadership culture, and even if someone mentions the definition in any study, they are only dealt with tangentially at most. If we interpret the few mentions, many may simply think that leadership culture is the projection of organizational culture at leadership level. I, however, think that this cannot be treated as exact facts. In my article, I am the first to try to define the concept of leadership culture, interpret its components and define the types that are present in the Hungarian Defense Forces.

The concept of organizational culture has been defined in many different ways, which vary from one study to another, and their empirical results are always controversial. The keywords or word combinations of the concept also change, but maybe there is a couple of them that can be found in all of them: values, convictions, beliefs and the sum of all of these adopted and interpreted together by all members of the organization. Obviously, the wordings vary by type of organization and will assume characteristics typical of the organization. These are the reasons why accurate phrasing of the definition is difficult. (Málovics, 2015).

Organizational culture was examined by Geert Hofstede, a Dutch cultural researcher whose scientific findings include the definition of the five dimensions of organizational culture, the ideal types of organizational culture, and the cornerstones of organizational culture. *"Geert Hofstede defines culture as the collective programming of thinking that is unique to a group or a certain category, and includes the common characteristics that influence our responses to changes in the environment. Culture is all that people do, think, and have as members of society."* (Török, 2012, p. 7).

Regarding leadership, he says: In leadership, leadership and organizational theories cannot be exported in the life of an organization without considering the cultural context. (Török, 2012). Based on this statement I look at military leadership culture, in relation to its peculiarities and components. Geert Hofstede died in 2020. His academic achievements have often been criticized in recent decades, and there have been many who consider them to be erroneous, but the cornerstones he laid down in his research of organizational culture can only be regarded as successes and building blocks. (Hofstede, 2008).

The person who ensures and validates the continuity of the organizational culture is the leader in the life of the organizations. The leader is a person who has his own way of thinking, experience and emotions, all of which is necessary to define the concept of leadership culture. For this reason, it is also important to examine the definition of leadership culture. The leader can always be examined from many angles. His or her activities can be studied based on his or her leadership style or even on the leadership role assumed. Examining and defining a leader's leadership culture is a very complex process. While the leadership style is used by the leader to carry out a task or chooses a leadership role to fill a position choosing or adopting, or adapting to, a leadership culture is not so

clear-cut activity which can be either conscious or subconscious. The individuality of the organization, its historical traditions, the composition of its employees, the organizational goals and the values interpreted and accepted must be taken into account. While the leadership style or the chosen leadership role can be changed, leadership culture is very difficult to change, not to mention the fact that change takes a long time. The leadership culture includes organizational culture, as it affects the leader inside the organization, therefore the leaders cannot free themselves from it.

In the military, organizational culture has a very strong presence. It has an impact on the lives of the subunits and thus on those who serve in them. It is multi-layered and can vary from one subunit to the next. Consider that the eponym of a subunit was chosen with good reason as his/her heroic actions or possible connection to the subunit can be historically proven. However, it also happens that a sub-unit within a unit, chooses to be named after another iconic person. For example, in the case of the Vitez Sandor Szurmay Budapest Garrison Brigade, the 32nd Home Defense Ceremonial Unit within the Brigade, as a regiment level organization, is the legal successor of the 32nd Infantry Regiment, preserving and passing on the mentality and organizational culture of the Infantry Regiment founded by Empress Maria Theresa.

The names and the battle order numbers that come before the designations of the military organizations all demonstrate how important organizational culture based on traditions and values is in the life of a military unit. This mentality has a great influence on military leaders who command the military organization. It is also possible to examine and look for the phenomenon of leadership culture from another perspective. The “service branch chauvinism” within of the army is a phenomenon known to everyone in the armed forces. The simplest way of approaching this concept is the sentiment of pride and partiality as the strongest symbol of adherence to a specific unit or corps. Think of armoured, infantry, reconnaissance, artillery or even logistics personnel. Belonging to each of the service branches forms a strong bond within the military organization. This may as well be called service branch culture, whose peculiarity and strength lies in the military equipment available, the tactical procedures used, the type and rigorousness of training requirements, or what special skills are typical of the service branch that the soldiers must master. This special service branch culture is fixed in the early stages of the socialization of belonging to a service branch, thanks to the above. Putting it into practice and maintaining it is, again, up to the leaders.

This could be examined from a great many angles (even based on the type of contribution to the operational mission), but whichever aspect you bring it to the foreground, as I wrote earlier, one thing is certainly true - the leaders have the greatest role, task and responsibility in developing, maintaining cherishing or even modernizing it. Without it, this process is unthinkable.

3 COMPONENTS OF THE LEADERSHIP CULTURE

Leadership culture is a very complex phenomenon. Based on my 20 years of military leadership experience, I boldly state that it follows from its complexity that many things need to be considered in determining it. Both; internal and external factors.

Internal factors:

- organizational culture
- organizational profile
- organizational goals
- higher command objectives
- leadership style
- leadership role
- leader's personality
- composition of subordinate personnel

External factors:

- social judgement
- role in society

Military leaders, as soldiers, are affected by both factors. As members of society, they have their own independent thoughts and views. They are also affected by these common or different social approaches or opinions, but as they are soldiers, the most influential factors for them are the set of rules and attitudes that are typical aspects of military life. (Farkas, 2010).

On the specialty of this, Huntington says: „*When people act in the same way for a long time, they usually develop characteristic and enduring thinking habits. Through their relationship with the world, which is unique to them, they look at the world only in a way that is unique to them, which leads them to find a reasonable explanation for their behaviour and role. This is especially true when the role is professional in nature. They pursue their profession in a more narrowly defined sense, more intensely and more exclusively and are more clearly isolated from other human activities than in most occupational fields.*” (Huntington, 1994).

The complex set of tasks, expectations and influences that military leaders are affected by is well reflected in his words. Leadership culture is perhaps one of the most elusive phenomena which cannot be described in one single definition and anyone who tried to do it would probably add something to it or take something from it that would equally make sense. What is a fact that can be clearly described is that it exists and influences the leader, shapes the organization, nurtures and protects values, and creates new ones.

4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP THINKING AND LEADERSHIP CULTURE

Military leadership thinking has been changed over the past decades, but in fact over the past century, by the same characteristic influences. (Sun Tzu, 2011, p.58). Test results of new combat equipment, new combat tactics, new theatres of operations, new challenges and the appearance of these effects. For a long time, the ground rules were what von Clausewitz¹ (Forgács, 2017). wrote, during the application of which there was a military

¹ “*Politics always defines military operations - in the words of Clausewitz: War is the continuation of politics by other means only. So we see that war is not just a political act, but a real political tool, the continuation of political contact, its realization by other means.*”

leader who sought the Hungarian character in addition to the Prussian principles. General Ferenc Szombathelyi was such a military leader, who said that less should be done politically than militarily to prepare for war. (Siposné Kecskeméthy - Kalavszky, 2018, p.359).

It was clearly demonstrable that the Hungarian soldier was not determined by his thinking, but by his actions in combat. (Kaló, 2010). After the quest for the Hungarian way, the presence of Russian influence in many ways changed military thinking, which even today can be found in the system. To prove this, suffice it to think of the conceptual level controversies in understanding "Commander" or "Military Leader." (Benkó, 2008). Following this, the American Military Leadership² principles were published that represented something radically different from the previous ones.

The people-centeredness and mission orientation of the military leadership were given the greatest role. Requirements emerged that are now unquestionable for a military leader, such as leading by example, authenticity or humaneness. The change and adaptation of leadership thinking leaves its mark on leadership culture. The effects of events recorded in history clearly and indisputably prove that the Hungarian military leaders have always been able to renew and their adaptability is one of their greatest virtues. Accession to NATO set examples for the leaders that completely changed the values and standards in the accomplishment of the missions. As leadership thinking evolved, so did leadership culture.

It adapted to the requirements of the times and it was formed with preserving those elements of the past that are values that can be passed on and that play a constructive role in the present. Based on the components of military leadership culture it can be said that one of the most decisive factors in the military leadership and the quality of leadership determines success. Its value and strength lie in how much the leader believes in it and how much he can convey it. While leadership thinking is a process aimed at problem solving and finding the most appropriate way in the system of tasks, leadership culture is a complex phenomenon that includes the values that the leader, together with his or her subordinates, creates or nurtures to achieve a goal of his or her own and the higher commander's intent.

5 THE EMERGENCE OF MILITARY LEADERSHIP CULTURE

The evolution of leadership culture emerges in military leaders as a result of many factors. The initial period of military socialization begins at the school desk or in basic training. It rests on the foundations of learning and experience. Later, the application and further development of the knowledge acquired is the breeding ground. The more external factors affect military leaders, the more diverse their leadership culture will be. The challenges, extreme situations, the effect of taking responsibility, the sensation of the unknown, the compulsion of standing their own ground all shape the culture. Positive and negative factors in the listed situations, such as experiencing success and failure, are one of the most important shaping forces.

A military leader is expected to have a systemic approach, think at least three levels up and down, plan for the long term, be able to change, be flexible, proactive, but rule-following, and always prioritize organizational goals over his or her own. Compliance with these is quite an

² FM 22-100, 2019: U.S. Armed Forces Leadership Doctrine, which includes the Military Leadership Concept. It was written in 1953 and was updated until 1999. The leadership doctrine containing current concepts in the U.S. military is ADP 6-22.

expectation in itself, but the result of this journey is the development of a specific leadership culture. What leadership style a leader chooses or what leadership roles he or she is able to assume is all attributable to this process, and results in the evolution of the leadership culture. Organizational culture is another influencing factor in the development of individual culture. Every soldier subconsciously and consciously adapts to the military unit where he or she serves. They pick up the peculiarities of organizational culture and identify with them after a while. This effect prevails on military leaders more forcefully. It shapes and forms their own opinions, convictions, way of thinking, but a situation may arise, when it pulls them back.

Of course, there are also circumstances where the military leaders can with great difficulty, or not at all, accept the organizational culture represented by the given organization. In this case, the leaders can do one of two things. They can try and shape themselves, approximate their own culture to that of the organization, because leaders who refuse to accept the operational concept of their own organization, cannot represent it either, thus they cannot convey it to their subordinates, and the efficiency indicators of the subunit led by them will fall short of the expectations.

6 TYPES OF MILITARY LEADERSHIP CULTURE

In 1986, Charles Handy created four types of organizational culture:

- power culture: power, influence and authority are mostly held in one hand and are centred around the individual leader. Leadership is determined by those in key positions. Individuals are evaluated based on their results. Decisions are made based on the balance of power.
- task culture: performance and its outcome are important here. Decision-making powers are shared and evaluation is always based on performance. Creativity and flexibility are also important.
- role culture: organizational roles are important components of it. The source of power is the position filled. Personal characteristics, ambitions, innovations, ideas do not matter. It is characterized by many job rules, bureaucratic order and rules of procedure.
- personality culture: people with great expertise establish an organization so power is only formally present, they are equal, decisions are made jointly, by consent, there is no leadership hierarchy. (Handy,1993).

Based on the culture types it can be clearly seen that there is not one typical among them that might completely be matched with the organizational culture of the Hungarian Defense Forces. Each of them has some features that can be integrated so the four types of military leadership cultures are present in a mixture, complemented by the peculiarities of the present.

Based on the above, in the development of leadership culture, because of the previously often mentioned complexity, the following military leadership culture models have emerged in my 20 years of military leadership experience:

- Dynamic

The leader chooses his or her leadership style and role by communicating his or her own ideas to the subordinate personnel with managerial thinking, taking into account the

organizational culture and setting the most usable values by his or her side. The leader represents the need to be able to respond to all situations in the fastest and most professional way possible, at the same time making sure that organizational values are not compromised and the subunit led by him or her appears in the best light.

- Improving

A leadership culture that is typical of young or immature leaders who are capable of improving. A typical feature of this leadership culture is the quest for the way of adaptation to the existing organizational culture. The leader's own leadership culture is under the evolution and it is adapting to organizational values and organizational goals.

- Casual

Keeping their own individuality, taking into account the organizational goals leaders shapes the command of a subunit by accepting the organizational culture, they are able to identify with it and convey it to the subordinate personnel, but refuse to spend more energy on it. The practical reflection of this is that the tasks are completed on time, but he has no constructive ideas, thus not contributing to the development of the organizational culture.

- Well organized

Leaders do everything they can to make sure organizational goals and values represented by the organization are never compromised. Their leadership culture is characterized by the organization's full support and subordination to it, thus ensuring in practice that tasks are fully planned and implemented at the subunit level. This ensures that the organizational culture of the unit and subunit is maintained.

- Problem solving

A unique leadership culture in which the leader favours those abilities both within himself and his subordinates that helps the organization to respond as effectively as possible to all situations, missions and problems. It has a constructive effect on the organizational culture, as a result of which many solutions are developed for a given situation, which can even lead to the development of new procedures, and as a result, other organizational elements can work better and more effectively. In this way, the organizational goals that nurture and build the organizational culture are better achieved.

- Resistant

The leaders completely deny and refuse to accept the peculiarities of organizational culture, they are therefore unable to adapt to it, so the culture they convey has a completely negative effect on those they lead, which in turn affects the achievement of organizational and managerial goals.

The development of a leadership culture in a leader's personality depends on what type of leadership styles and leadership roles he or she prefers and what personality traits they associate with, as well as the strength of the organizational culture's presence and the values that the organization prefers in the subordinate personnel.

CONCLUSION

In my article I attempted to define the concept of military leadership culture based on my own leadership experience, to interpret its components and to define the types that are present in the Hungarian Defence Forces. Organizational culture and leadership culture are in a very close interrelationship. Organizational culture includes the values, traditions, convictions and common objectives of a complete system and the leaders draw on their own personality, abilities, adapting to the reflection of the organizational culture on the individual level. It can be seen that they mutually affect each other because the leader conveys organizational culture, so it is brought to bear indirectly through the leader.

It is important that the leader should believe in it, because only in that case can he credibly convey the values that are important in keeping the organizational culture, and thereby the leader can contribute to further developing those values. The evolution of leadership culture in a leader is a lengthy process and the goal is to raise it to an appropriate, effective level. Maturity is the key to the leader being able to consciously communicate common values. This is based on a good leadership culture. The leaders should believe in what they stand for or what they convey, because the only way to be able to support the organization in its everyday progress towards achieving its goals. The practical appearance of the leadership culture employed before the subordinate personnel ensures the quality of conveying for the leader.

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