



SIMPLIFICATION, EFFECT OF THE CRITICAL THINKING, IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTINUOUS TRANSFORMATION AND CHALLENGES OF THE NATIONAL DEFENCE SYSTEM

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The general aspects of the transformation, as well as the continuous challenges, generated by the dynamic evolution of the national defence system, represent the thematic context, meant to substantiate and to particularize this article. Moreover, our analysis focuses on multiple perspectives specific to the transformation of the national defence system, as well as the way in which the Romanian Army goes through this period of renewal, meant to preserve its viability and give it recognition as an army corresponding to the Euro-Atlantic security environment.

Also, starting from the idea of simplification, as an effect of critical thinking, we will formulate and present a new vision on the importance of critical thinking as the root of the decision-making process.

In this context, the purpose of our scientific approach is to present the concept of critical thinking, by appealing to a number of its definitions, found in the specialty literature, and to emphasize a strategic advantage offered by it, namely that, whenever we want to understand a factual situation or to undertake a complex, difficult action, we must approach it with simplicity, but also with a critical, innovative spirit.

Keywords: simplification; critical thinking; national defence system; transformation; OTAN; EU.

The *national defence system* has to be permanently prepared for the current and future transformations and challenges. *Transformation*, in the *military sector*, is a multidimensional process, which nevertheless generates a series of vulnerabilities at the level of the national defence system. Moreover, the process of change is influenced and depends, both by and on the internal state factors, such as the national economy and the political decision, as well as on external factors, such as the international political and military dynamics.

In this context, it can be easily noticed that such transformations must not take place chaotically, but be the result of a process aiming at fostering efficiency and flexibility, as well as at permanently ensuring the continuity and opportunity of the leadership at all levels¹.

In all this process of *reshaping the national defence system*, of real use prove to be the people who use *critical thinking* and who are, thus, able to ask pertinent questions and to evaluate arguments, who are interested in identifying new solutions, listening carefully to others before expressing their

opinion, and who are, also, able to correct their opinions when they identify elements that partially or totally invalidate their point of view.

Conceptual delimitations and possible thematic connections

Regarding the operational definition of the *critical thinking* concept, we initiate the scientific approach by presenting its evolution in time. Thus, the concept started to be more and more often employed and developed in the second half of the 20th century and, in the contemporary period, has become a topic of notoriety.

The first use of the concept of *critical thinking* seems to date back in 1941, in a course, *An Experiment in the Development of Critical Thinking* by Edward Glaser, the well-known author of one of the most widely used *critical thinking test*, *Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal*. According to Glaser, "critical thinking is a name for the continuous effort to examine any belief or any supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence it is based on and, moreover, of the conclusions it is directed towards"².

In our approach, we shall also consider other definitions, developed in the specialized literature, such as: "critical thinking is the art of analysing and assessing judgment in order to improve it"³; critical

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thinking is a continuous process of understanding, questioning, observing, analysing and formulating judgements⁴; "critical thinking is the discipline to use rigorously and skilfully information, experience and reasoning for guiding your decision, actions and beliefs"⁵.

Critical thinking is, first of all, a tool used in designing new opinions. Particularly, it is used by leaders, managers, commanders, those who, in order to accomplish the mission or the set objectives, choose the best action by employing this tool, which facilitates the making of correct decisions among a series of means and possibilities, helping them solve the problems they confront, starting directly from the cause.

Therefore, from all these definitions, presented above, we understand that the concept of *critical thinking* involves the capacity to act argumentatively in solving problems, employing clear reasoning, result-based thinking, relying on the analysis of all the available and relevant information, which the decision-making factors must have, so as to propose optimal solutions in order to solve community issues, and so as for the result and the manner of solving such problems not to generate new, additional, more complex and more serious problems than the initial ones. Thus, considering, on one hand, that the *critical thinking* is the result of open, clear judgement and, on the other hand, the fact that dynamic processes constantly take place throughout the world, it becomes evident, in this context, that there is a possibility to identify, by appealing to the methods and procedures specific to this concept, optimal solutions, including the management of new risks and vulnerabilities to national defence.

Besides, as a result of a general reflexion on the adequate role of the *critical thinking*, we can reach in time the reliable conclusion that, in spite of its rich history, this concept, which has constantly developed, keeps, at present, its character of novelty, which enjoys paradoxically a real, more and more important success.

The concept of *critical thinking* represents, in equal measure, the capacity to analyse, produce new ideas, to formulate opinions and to assess the arguments for the purpose of solving problems.

Regarding the second concept of the topic of this article, *transformation*, it is defined as *a process that allows the support of strategic interests*. The

drive of the transformation is the context of the changes that occur in the society, the turn from the industrial age to the information age, the changes in the characteristics of war, as well as the asymmetric threats. The answer, from the technological point of view, is channelled towards ensuring a high level of availability in terms of information technology. As a consequence, there are essential changes in the context of security, military, departmental strategies, as well as of the strategies approaching risks and threats management⁶.

The national defence system comprises: the leadership, the forces, the resources and the territorial infrastructure⁷.

In this context, we consider it appropriate also to recall the fact that, in the last 31 years, i.e. after 1989, the national defence system has gone through a series of major political, economic and social changes, as a result of the evolution of the security environment and of Romania joining NATO and the EU. NATO as well as the EU concepts are the basis for *the transformation of the national defence system*, for modernization and for ensuring stability. However, at present, the transformation process is not completed, but is continuously changing, in order to build up the new security architecture.

The transformation of the national defence system, thus, takes place permanently both at organizational level and at the level of the forces and capabilities structure, considering the necessity to develop modern, adequately equipped, mobile, interoperable forces, capable of self-support and multidimensional protection, with a flexible and efficient command and control system. *The process is systemic and interdisciplinary, taking place on a medium and long term, by efficiently using the available resources*⁸.

The process representing the foundation of the army transformation and modernization is the *defence planning*, a process that includes the *totality of the programmes, actions and measures initiated by Romania for the identification, development and preparation of the military and non-military capabilities required to carry out the missions and to implement the defence objectives*, for the following purposes: the fulfilment of the obligations arising from the *Constitution of Romania* and from the relevant legislation; fulfilment of Romania's obligations in terms of ensuring the collective security and defence within

NATO; ensuring the participation of Romania to the *Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union*; fulfilling the commitments in the context of international military cooperation in the defence sector with other states and fulfilling the obligations arising from the participation to the activity of other international organizations, as well as in other situation regulated by the international norms, as stipulated by law⁹.

There have been substantial changes along the years in the very physiognomy of the forces system and other will, certainly, take place in the future.

Another part of the national defence system transformation process is the *integrated management of the defence resources*: the management of the human resources, the management of the financial resources, the management of the defence procurement, the management of the research-development and innovation system, the management of the defence infrastructure¹⁰.

Regarding the third concept specific to this article, *simplification*, it is necessary to mention that *this process may have a positive impact on the results*, Romania playing a key role in ensuring it. Yet, experience shows us that sometimes there can be errors. The experience of the Romanian Armed Forces, in this direction, is capitalized through a critical approach of the military practice and thinking. The sharing of knowledge with other member states, as well as the training of staff, significantly contribute to the success of *the simplification of the national defence system*. The simplification actions are going to aim at an integrated approach for legislative and organizational point of view, in close correlation with the measures taken at European level, so as the useless administrative barriers might be progressively removed. In this process, obviously, we consider *critical thinking* to be a real benefit, through its simplification tools, designed to facilitate knowledge, in the first stage of the process, and, then, to provide to the people involved solutions for managing actions or measures needed to be implemented.

In this context, by referring to the etymology of the term, which leads us to the Greek word *kritikos*, which means *judgment that divides in two*, so that the information can be placed in clear categories (true or false), thus eliminating confusion, the logical relationship between the concept *critical thinking* and *simplification* becomes obvious. In

other words, *simplification* is a consequence of *critical thinking*, a consequence that can have a positive impact on the results of actions taken or on the formulation of solutions.

Conclusions

The society is constantly going through stages of transformation, adaptation, modernization and development, meant to give it the opportunity to manage permanent challenges. The military institution is also going through this evolution, of course, and it is in a constant process of progress, innovation and adaptation.

In this article, we have highlighted the opportunity for leaders, whether political or military, to use methods and tools specific to *critical thinking* – as effective means to achieve performance or to apply them in the transformation process. We also pointed out that the term *critical thinking* has recently gained recognition as a recommended solution for solving, through specific techniques and procedures (*brainstorming, predictions based on key terms, deductions and inductions, analyses, comparisons, etc.*), problems, in different fields. By default, *critical thinking* can be used, successfully, in the dynamic and complex process of *transforming the national defence system*.

The changes which take place at the level of the military organization involve modern management procedures, the accumulation of new skills and new specialized knowledge. That is why the use of *critical thinking*, to facilitate and to ensure the success of *the transformation process* (by real knowledge of the particularities and by analysis all possible solutions), is a strategic advantage. In other words, by appealing to *critical thinking*, the processes and actions needed to take place in *the transformation, planning* or in the *management of defence resources* can be supported. Specifically, by *simplifying* different cases, specific information, *as a result of applying the tools of critical thinking (analysis, induction, deduction, synthesis, comparison, interpretation, observation, etc.)*, depending on the context and needs, leaders / decision makers can make the best decisions, much faster and easier.

In this way, considering the fact that the process of transforming the Romanian Army is a continuous one and it represents a strategic priority ("Implementing the program provisions



regarding the transformation, development and endowment of the Romanian Army until 2027 and in perspective¹¹), critical thinking becomes useful and relevant, both for this process and for the management of the continuous challenges of the national defence system.

Critical thinking thus represents an important element which ensures that success of a state, in a period when the information changes rapidly, offering different perspectives, arising from the complexity and dynamism of the national defence system. Through the abilities of the leadership factors and the responsibilities assumed in full awareness and in a reasonable manner, at all the hierarchical levels of the army, a dynamic balance, ensuring the stability of the system has been preserved during the change process.

Another conclusion, highly relevant for our approach, is formulated by professor Dumitru Iacob. We shall also resort to it: "(...), an extremely simple idea may be formulated, an idea that works with the force of an imperative: when you face a problem and try to find and promote a solution for such a problem, look carefully at the context of the problem and of the solution; the highest risk in a moment like this is to solve the problem concerned, through the foreseen solution, but to generate other problems, more numerous and more serious than the problem solved, through the nature of the solution and through the manner of solving the problem"¹².

At the same time, considering the diversity of experiences and differences, existing at the level of the national defence system, it has become clear that what may be considered at *simplification*, in some member states, may be regarded as arduous and difficult in other states.

In order to have a clear image of *the transformation process*, the Romanian Armed Forces has to be involved directly, through its specific means, in supporting the stability and security in Europe.

The *operationalization of the Romania Armed Forces* is an essential component, based on a series of legislative and programmatic documents, such as: *Blank Charter of Defence, Law on the National Defence of Romania no. 45/1994 (updated), Romanian Armed Forces Transformation Strategy, National Defence Strategy of the Country for the period 2015-2019 – A strong Romania in Europe and worldwide*¹³.

Thus, operationalization is essential given the fact that the Romanian Armed Forces have become a modern and credible, strong force, trained and developed in compliance with the NATO standards, and Romania has proven a loyal partner of the Alliance, a serious ally. In this context, our country is required also to continue the process of strengthening its own armed forces and to pay special attention to the modernization and equipment of the armed forces, by modernizing the existing military equipment, as well as by procuring new one.

Even if a military crisis involving Romania is unlikely, there is a possibility for such a threat to emerge. Therefore, the national defence system must be consolidated, with military technology and personnel, in order to act rapidly in case of such confrontation, to face major changes and to adapt efficiently to the changing character of the current security environment.

The political and military alliance has adapted to the security evolutions, strengthened its reaction capabilities, consolidated its defence and deterrent position and represents, at present, a pillar of stability for Romania. In turn, our country is an active partner, a strong and reliable NATO ally, continuing to take all the responsibilities within the Alliance, being a solid Euro-Atlantic provider of stability and security.

The measures that the budgetary construction relies on, in the current known circumstances, i.e. a limited budget for the national defence system, lead to the hypothesis that those who run the transformation process, the decision-making factors, must prove excellent skills and abilities, be good managers, succeed in correlating the allocated financial resources with the national defence priority objectives and, mainly, with the human resource of the army, with a focus on the quality of the professional training of the military and civilian staff.

In order to summarize the essential aspects regarding the hypothesis formulated, which was the basis of this article, simplification, as an effect of critical thinking, in the context of the transformation and continuous challenges of the national defence system, we shall conclude by resorting again to the information presented in the book of professor Dumitru Iacob, *Changing War and Peace. National Defence – New Risks and Vulnerabilities*, and,

more specifically, to an invitation to introspection, using the critical thinking tool: "What would the Romanians do? The Romanians could, and should, clean their house, garden, front door and street. They should keep their household in good conditions and be hardworking in cities. For this, the teachers of the community, the schoolteacher and the priest, are expected to cooperated for the well-being of the community ..."¹⁴.

NOTES:

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2 Gheorghe Clitan, *Gândire critică. Micromonografie*, Eurobit Publishing House, Timișoara, 2003, p. 27.

3 Richard Paul, PhD, Linda Elder, PhD, "The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking. Concepts and tools", *The Foundation for Critical Thinking*, https://www.criticalthinking.org/files/Concepts_Tools.pdf, accessed on 10.05.2020.

4 *** *Critical Thinking: Developing Skills for Successful Thinking*, https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_95.htm, accessed on 10.05.2020.

5 *Ibidem*.

6 [Ministry of National Defence], *Romanian Armed Forces Transformation Strategy*, Chapter 1, Bucharest, 2007, https://www.mapn.ro/programe_strategii/, accessed on 11.05.2020, p. 4.

7 *** *Law on the national defence of Romania no. 45*, on July 1, 1994, updated, art. 6, <https://www.legisplus.ro/Intralegis6/oficiale/afis.php?f=168143&datavig=2020-05-14&datav=2020-05-14&dataact=&showLM=&modBefore=>, accessed on 14.05.2020.

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9 *** *Law no. 203, on July 16, 2015, concerning defence planning*, art. 1, para. (2); https://dpap.mapn.ro/app/webroot/fileslib/upload/files/Planificare%20apararii/Legea_203-2015.pdf, accessed on 14.05.2020.

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11 https://www.gov.ro/fisiere/programe_fisiere/MApN_Plan_strategic.pdf, accessed on 03.06.2020.

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13 [Presidential Administration], *Strategia Națională de Apărare a Țării pentru perioada 2015-2019 - O Românie*

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14 Dumitru Iacob, *op cit.*, p. 83.

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