

CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY IN A CLOSED ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT – THE ARMY. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This article is part of a primary research aimed to identify the characteristics and differences in the motivational system of military organization employees of Romanian and U.S. army. The study was conducted by applying the questionnaire, with mixed questions, self provided to Romanian and American army officers, on a sample of 104 respondents, of which 74 are Romanian soldiers and 30 American soldiers. The method used is a non-probability sampling, based on a pre-defined purpose. The research results can not be extended to the whole army.

We can see that for both armies, the six social factors, namely: family, personal safety, career, national identifying elements, friends and colleagues, are the primary motivation for Romanian and American troops, the only difference being given by the importance of each category separately. From the perspective of Romanian officers and NCOs, the family and personal safety are very important for both staff with certain features.

Romanian Army takes and adapts best practice examples of American and European military, organizational practices such as those of the military system. Continuous adaptation of the military organization to the civil society shows concern for the external operating environment and ensuring the ability of a military unit.

Keywords: organization, closed professional community, career, motivation, military officer

Résumé

Cet article fait partie d'une recherche fondamentale visant à identifier les caractéristiques et les différences dans le système de motivation des employés dans l'organisation militaire de la Roumanie et l'armée américaine. L'étude a été menée en appliquant le questionnaire avec des questions officiers de l'armée autogérées mixtes et roumains et américains, sur un échantillon de 104 répondants, dont 74 soldats roumains et 30 soldats américains. La méthode utilisée est un échantillonnage probabiliste, d'échantillonnage ou sur la base d'un objet prédéfini. Et les résultats de la recherche ne peuvent pas être étendues à toute l'armée.

Nous pouvons voir que les deux armées six facteurs sociaux, à savoir: la famille, la sécurité personnelle, la carrière, les identifiants nationaux, amis et collègues sont la principale motivation pour le roumain et les troupes américaines, la seule différence étant donnée par l'importance de chaque catégorie séparément. Du point de vue des officiers roumains et de la famille et la sécurité personnelle sont très importants tant pour le personnel que certaines fonctions.

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Armée roumaine prend et s'adapte exemples de meilleures pratiques d', les pratiques organisationnelles militaires américains et européens, tels que ceux du système militaire. Une adaptation continue de l'organisation militaire de la société civile se préoccupe de l'environnement opérationnel externe et d'assurer la capacité d'une unité militaire.

Mots-clés: organisation, fermé communauté professionnelle, la carrière, la motivation, de l'armée

Rezumat

Acest articol reprezintă o parte a unei cercetări primare având ca scop identificarea caracteristicilor și diferențelor privind sistemul motivațional al angajaților din organizația militară din armata română și cea americană. Studiul s-a realizat prin aplicarea unui chestionar de opinie, cu întrebări mixte, autoadministrat ofițerilor și subofițerilor din armata română și americană, pe un eșantion de 104 respondenți, din care 74 sunt militari români și 30 sunt militari americani. Metoda de eșantionare utilizată este una neprobabilistică, respectiv eșantionarea bazată pe un scop predefinit. Rezultatele cercetării realizate nu pot fi extinse pentru întreaga armată.

Putem observa că pentru ambele armate cei șase factori sociali, respectiv: familia, siguranța personală, cariera, elementele de identificare națională, prietenii și colegii sunt primordiale pentru motivația militarilor români și americani, singura diferență fiind dată de importanța fiecărei categorii în parte. Din perspectiva ofițerilor și subofițerilor români familia și siguranța personală sunt foarte importante pentru ambele categorii de personal, cu anumite particularități.

Armata română preia și adaptează exemple de bune practici din domeniul militar american și european, practici precum cele ale sistemului organizațional al militarilor. Adaptarea continuă a organizației militare la societatea civilă denotă grija față de mediul operațional extern și de asigurare a capacității unui sistem militar unitar.

Cuvinte cheie: organizație, comunitate profesională închisă, carieră, motivație, militar

1. Introduction

Over the centuries, a number of predominant features have been identified as the components of universal military psychology, namely: fear, honor, morale, discipline, courage, solidarity, revenge, ideology, aggression, subordination, camaraderie, fighting spirit, hatred against the enemy, contempt, death, unconditional sacrifice (var den Dennen 2005, p. 81). Some of these traits occurred mostly during the great global conflicts where those who have lived and believed them, have created history. The frequent training camps and rigorous discipline perfected over time by the Romanian army have helped to form soldiers for fighting in common training camps.

Since joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Romanian Army has undergone a series of changes that were designed to align the Romanian military system to the partner armies standards. Participation in international

missions with the U.S. military led to taking ideas for improving human resource management in the army. Generally, the military organization wants to provide to the people a picture of soldiers as “angels of peace” (Jelusič 2007, p. 74) that reinforces the sense of security of the civilian population. This is confirmed also by many studies performed over the years in Romania, that placed the army on the first two places regarding the confidence criteria of population, among which we include the study conducted in 2012 by Vasile Dâncu, *After the referendum. Effects of political crisis on the confidence in institutions, professions and Romanian partners*.

2. Characteristics of the Romanian army versus the U.S. army

The Army is an hierarchically structured organization and represents “all the military forces of a State” (*Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language* 1998, p. 60). Also, it “is subject solely to the will of the people to safeguard the sovereignty, independence and unity of the State, territorial integrity and constitutional democracy. Under the law and the international treaties to which Romania is party, the army contributes to collective defense in military alliance systems, and participates in the maintenance or restoration of peace” (*Constitution of Romania*, art. 118, para. 1).

In Romania there are several structures of the armed forces, namely: land forces, air forces and naval forces. According to the law, the Ministry of National Defence of Romania leads and conducts country defense activities and “consists of central structures, structures and their subordinate forces” (Law no. 346/2006, art. 1, para. 2). Compared with the Romanian army, the U.S. has the same types of forces, with the particularity that naval forces have two divisions: marine forces (the navy) and marine infantry (marine corps). Marine corps carry out missions with different character, but in cooperation with naval forces

Directive No. 5100.01, dated 21st of December 2010, is the document based on which the Department of Defense of the United States of America (USA), equivalent of the Ministry of National Defence of Romania, operates. At the level of our country, Law no. 346/2006 is the one that establishes the organization and functioning of the Ministry of National Defence of Romania. In addition to existing legislation in each country, the army as hierarchical system is strictly closed, “governed” by its own internal regulations governing each activity to the smallest detail, which must be observed and be on time, otherwise those who do not comply, are harshly punished.

Currently, the military is constantly changing, and this requires the development of human resources management by transforming it into a strategic and coherent approach, destined to face challenges and external influences. We must keep in mind that “the establishment of a professional army was and is a major effort, consisting also of personnel policy aspects and of social problem solving that involves significant financial resources” (Florișteanu 2008, p. 66).

Also, the success of the military organization and the importance of training of specialists in the field is given by the strategy of human resources policies, focusing on the motivational system, closely linked to the funds allocated for research and development of new technologies and programs. In the literature we find that “within current conditions, in which the army restructuring program continues, a process in which units transfer situations from a financing program to another is met, so as not to disturb their activity, is important that their transfer to another funding program be accompanied by simultaneous transfer of financial resources for the current year” (*Ibidem*: 66). All these changes do not diminish the interior process within the military units and morale of military officers.

3. Methodology

The purpose of the survey is to identify the characteristics and differences in the military organizational system, with an emphasis on military motivational between Romanian and U.S. army. In the present research we used an opinion survey, with mixed self-managed questions, to Romanian and American army officers. The study was conducted during May-July 2012. The sample consists of a total of 104 respondents, of which 74 are Romanian soldiers and 30 American soldiers. The sampling method used is a non-probabilistic method, i.e. sampling based on purposes (Babbie, 2010). Research results can not be extended to the whole army. We chose to present comparative results in terms of U.S. military versus Romanian army and officers versus NCOs, because in reality, the first category (the U.S. military and officers) is superior in terms of experience gained in conflicts attended (U.S. Army) and hierarchical (officers) to the second category (Romanian army and NCOs). Also, the first category can be a model to consider compared to the second category.

4. Research results

a. Social factors that contribute to motivating Romanian and U.S. military officers

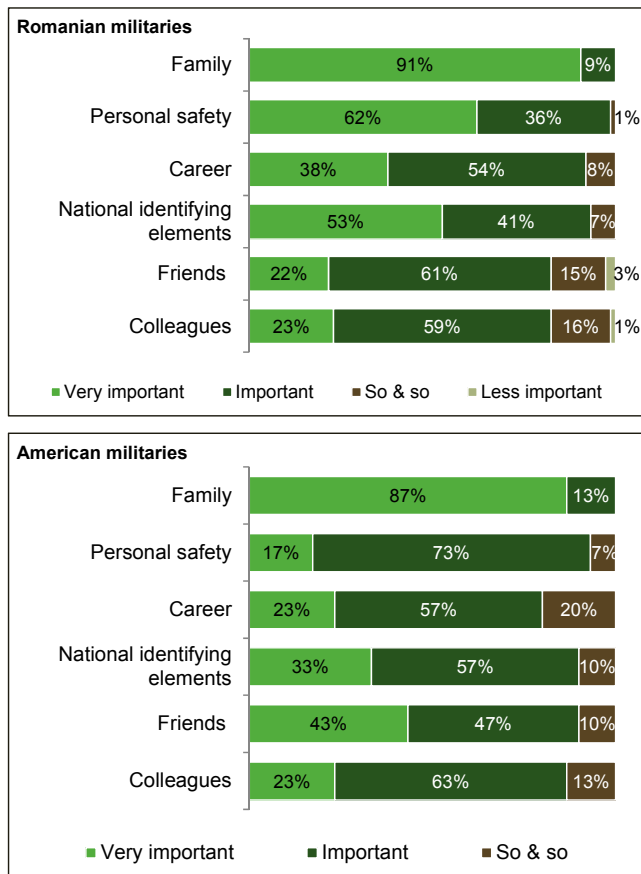
For every Romanian or American military, “motivation may occur with a much lower frequency when participants are urged to also consider alternative perspectives” (Druckman 2012, p. 204). We can not overlook the fact that every person, whether military or civilian, tries to accomplish the goal without making much effort, therefore we are always looking for a more feasible and easily accessible alternative.

For each military, there are social factors that may contribute to the motivation for a military career, namely: family, personal safety, career, national identity elements, friends and colleagues. According to the life experience, these factors have a higher or lower value for a military career, especially that for some, these

are essential pillars for some life decisions. However, some of these factors have a greater or lesser contribution for the military due to the training they perform and the existence of perceptions specific to the military organizational environment.

Regarding social factors of the Romanian and American military's life, 91% of Romanian respondents, i.e. 87% of American respondents considered the family as being very important. Personal safety is viewed differently by respondents of the two armies. For U.S. respondents, personal safety is categorized as 73% important compared to the Romanians, who deem it important with a percentage of 62%. These differences may be due to the army's existing eccentricities at American military level, due to age of military officers compared with those of the Romanian army, who are more experienced and with family responsibilities. The average age of Romanian respondents is 33.5 years of age, compared to that of the U.S., which is 23.4 years.

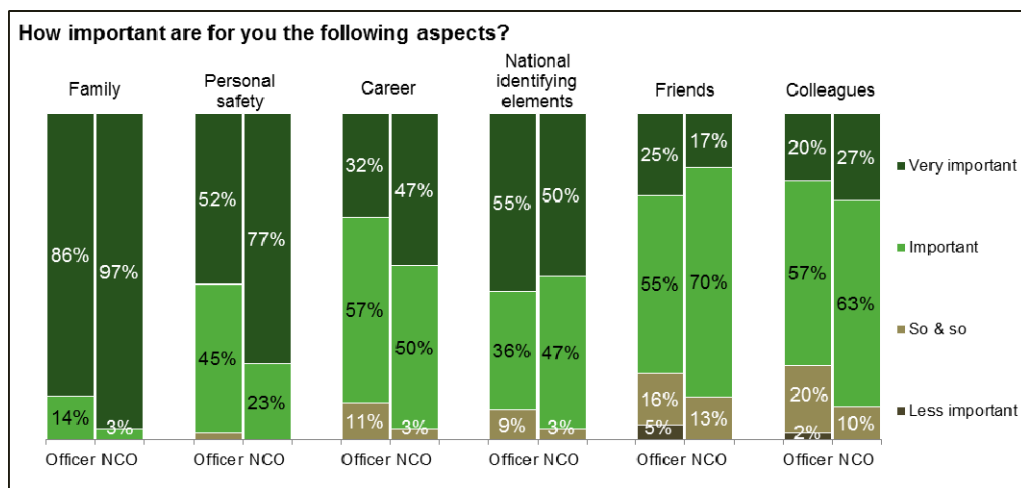
Fig. 1: Comparison between social factors in the life of Romanian and U.S. military



It should be noted that for both armies, the six social factors, namely: family, personal safety, career, national identity elements, friends and colleagues are rarely chosen as the response option “less important” by respondents or not at all in some cases (see the chart of U.S. military above). This means that they are primary for the motivation of Romanian and American troops, the only difference being given by the importance of each separate category. We can say that a stronger motivation serves as a support for better performance and increased efficiency of participants by accepting working conditions (Jelusić 2007, p. 75).

If we change the perspective from which we look at the *importance of social factors* discussed above, these have some similarities in terms of Romanian officers and NCOs. The family and personal safety are very important for both officers and the NCOs, but should be noted that regarding certain peculiarities – referring to personal safety, 52% of the officers consider it as very important, compared to 77% of NCOs.

Fig. 2: Comparison between aspects of Romanian officers and NCOs life



The leadership of officers formed during the studies, from a military highschool to the academy studies, determine them to put personal safety on a secondary position in favour of subordinates’ safety. On the other hand, among NCOs, personal safety culture is very closely linked to the team it belongs to, and the perception of NCOs is that if personal safety is ensured, automatically the team safety is the same.

Both Romanian military personnel, officers and NCOs, are soldiers by definition. Even from the military educational institutions desks, they can have a clear picture of their careers through the exact identification of the period it has to pass for each degree separately. However, they acknowledge also the fact that in order to be advanced to the next hierarchical level, must follow career courses that prepare

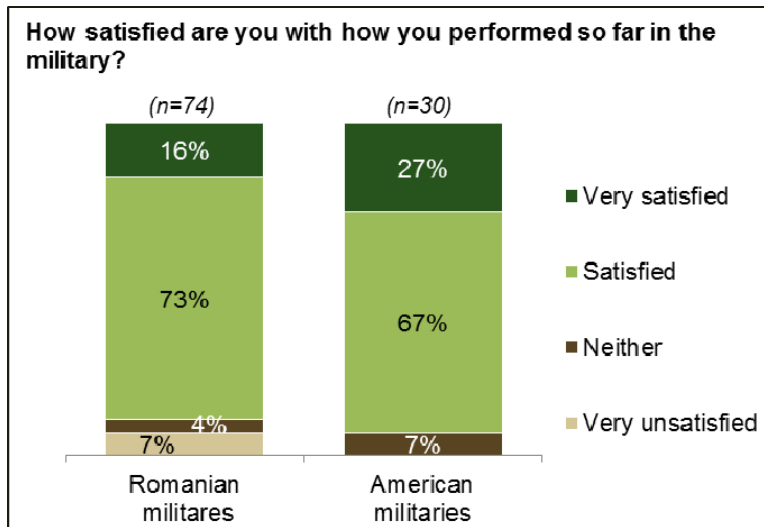
them from the theoretical and practical point of view for the requirements and grade of the job position.

4.1. Perceptions about the prospects of development in military career

Law no. 80/1995 is the legal framework of the career development of Romanian military army. Over the years, this law has been updated and adapted to the needs arising on Romania's accession to NATO (2004) and European Union (2007).

In the study conducted, regarding the item which referred to the satisfaction level on the *progress in the military field of expertise* of the respondents, 89% (66) of Romanian soldiers say they are satisfied and very satisfied, similar to the 94% (28) of the U.S. military which have the same opinion.

Fig. 3: Comparative analysis of satisfaction level on the progress in the military career (Romanian and American militaries)



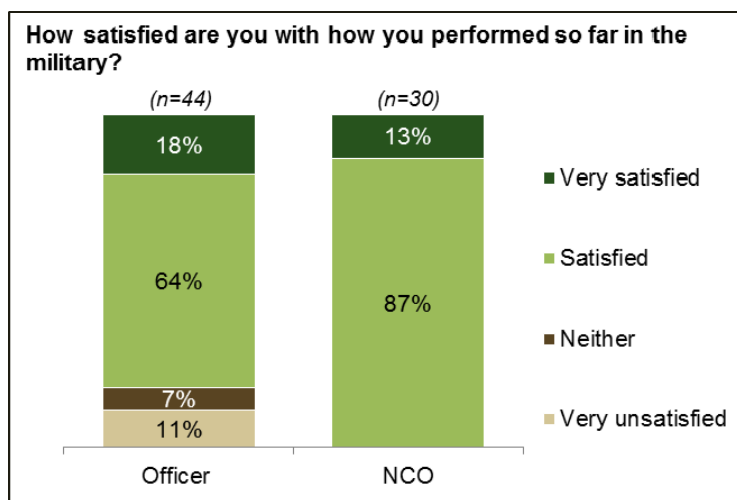
The high degree of satisfaction shown in the chart above can be argued by the fact that the army is a hierarchical organization with internal regulations which clearly stipulates the evolution of each military employee, whether it's an officer or NCO. Army ensures equal opportunities for all, while minimizing the degree of dissatisfaction due to human subjectivity.

Each individual, whether it respects and does not commit misconduct by the regulations which draws upon him serious sanctions such as the stagnation of his rising military career, may be promoted in grade and function according to the laws in force. For example, according to article 73 of Law 80/1995, a military is periodically evaluated on the job. This "is the only valuable document of professional competence, moral quality, development and promotion prospects, by which

officers, warrant officers and NCOs are forwarded to the next level” (Law 80/1995, art. 73). If that grade received as appreciation of service is not a favorable one, there is the risk that the officer or NCO may not be promoted to the next hierarchical level.

From the point of view of the Romanian respondents, from a total of 74 officers and NCOs, 84% of the latter, and 64% of those first, respectively, declare they are satisfied about their military career up to the date. We can not omit the fact that 11% of respondent officers stated that are very dissatisfied, compared with respondent NCOs who did not have this opinion.

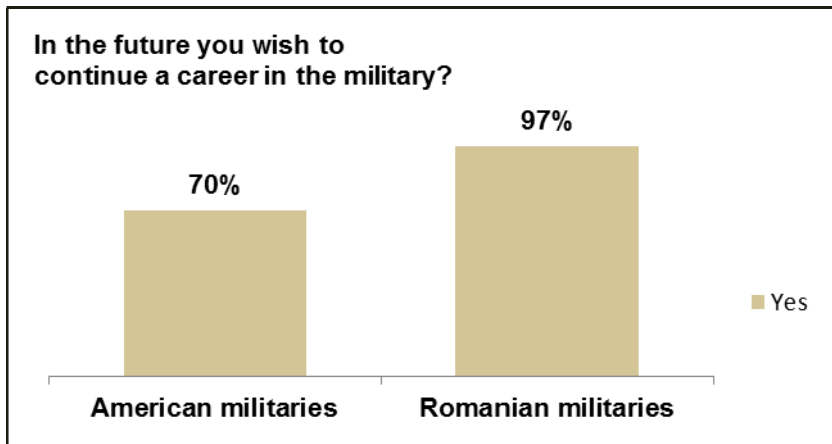
Fig. 4: Comparative analysis of satisfaction level on the progress in the military career (Romanian officers and NCOs)



This can be explained mainly by the slow flow of the existing staff at the moment. Along with achieving higher ranks, the number of functions in a military unit is reduced, and this requires officers to identify appropriate functions for the rank they have been promoted to in other units from other cities. In this case there may be two alternatives: either they have to commute or move their residence together with the family, which requires some changes among family members, especially if there are children involved. If officers do not want to have another position in another city, with all the accompanying implications, then they choose to delay the progress in rank until such positions appear in the residing town.

Regarding the *continuation of a military career*, 97% of Romanian respondents said they want to pursue this career, the vast majority of U.S. military respondents had the same option. Romanian respondents who chose not to continue a career in the military field, reasoned that “it is not what they are looking for” and American respondents said they want to “continue in another field.”

Fig. 5: Comparative view on the continuation of a military career (Romanian and American troops)



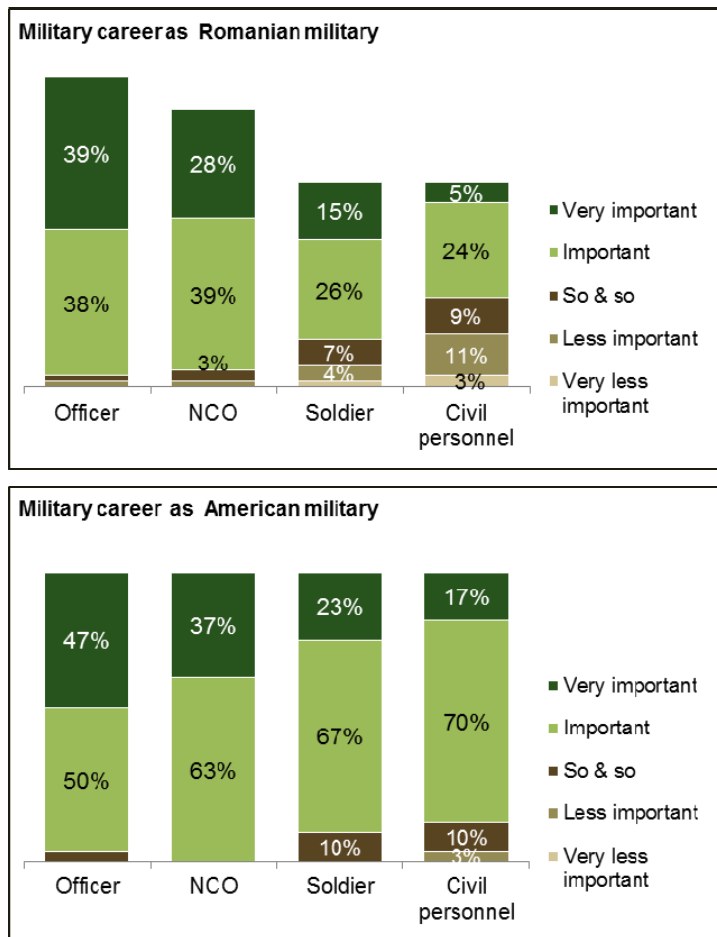
In a study connected to the confidence level of the population in Romanian professions, conducted by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES) in 2012, 81% of respondents say they trust the military profession, being positioned among the top professions in the country. We conclude that, within the current economic context of the contemporary world, when the uncertainty is hanging over our lives, the military profession is viable and safe financially and socially. This is confirmed by our study, namely the Romanian and American militaries who generally want job positions to continue the military career also from the job security point of view.

4.2. The importance given to military career

Depending on the reasons for choosing the military career, each individual gives a higher or lower importance to it. The main reason is related to the desire for self-improvement, beyond this personal determinant, but any professional achievements and social status (Taubman-Ben-Ari & Findler 2006, p.157) that can not be achieved in the civil world can contribute to this opinion. The importance is given also based on the experience they have acquired over time and it has marked the career prospects.

The picture of the significance given to military career by respondents of our study can be presented as shown below, where 39% of Romanian officers respondents consider it important compared with 47% of American officers respondents who had a similar opinion.

Fig. 6: Comparative analysis of the degree of importance given to military career (Romanian and American)



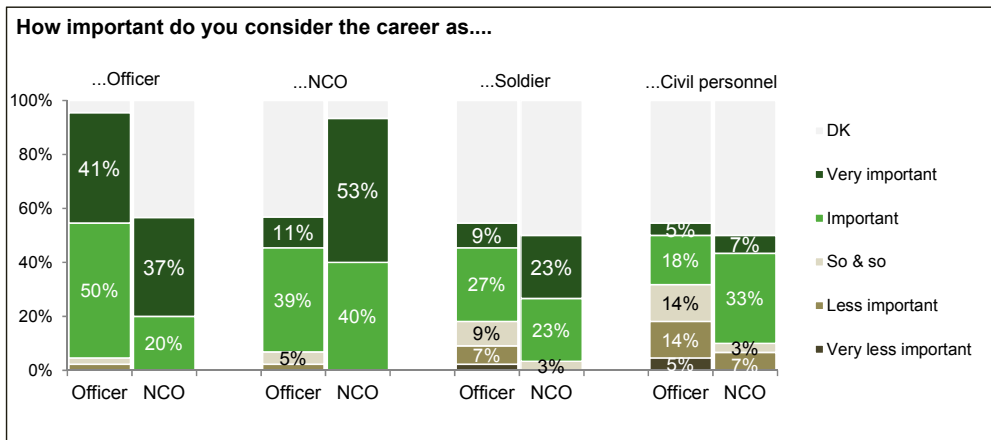
For those who until they have responded to the questionnaire applied in the study, the military career went as expected, this detail was the base for positioning career on the first two positions (important and very important). On the other hand, for reasons attributable to them or not, respondents encountered some gaps in career, having a sense of resignation that lead to positioning the career on the last positions (least significant, very less important).

Regardless of the category of personnel (officer, NCO, soldier, civilian), American soldiers give the career a much higher importance than Romanian soldiers, this can be explained in terms of different social attitudes existing in the two armies and diversified experiences involving respondents from the two countries, with a plus for the Americans. For example, American soldiers have

been active in the fight against terrorism after the events of September 11 2001, which led to declaring war in Afghanistan. Also, they participated in the war in Iraq and all the major conflicts in the world in the last century. This is the background of the American soldiers, to the detriment of Romanian soldiers who were involved in peacekeeping activities under the United Nations (UN) and NATO. The lack of experience of Romanian military personnel is not considered a minus, because Romania can not be positioned in terms of economic and military elements, on the same level with the U.S.A.

Referring to the distribution of the significance given to the career depending on the categories of personnel, out of 74 Romanian respondents, of which 44 officers, 39% considered the career of NCOs as important, compared with the opinion of 30 NCOs respondents, of which only 20% felt that the career of officers is important.

Fig. 7: Comparative analysis of the degree of importance given to career military (officers and NCOs)



We can not observe the subjectivity of each personnel category when they need to perform a ranking of their careers compared to other categories. Despite these results, the military organization as a whole can not operate with a single class of personnel, and militaries are aware of this desideratum and contribute to the smooth running of the activity for achieving the common goal – i.e. military effectiveness. This can be achieved depending on “five main dimensions, namely: success of the mission, integration into the military environment, welfare and members’s commitment, adaptation to the outside world and the military ethos” (Duțu, Moștoflei 2007, p. 34).

The effectiveness on which any army carries out its defence mission, depends on “existing capabilities, structure and organization of forces, equipment and staff support systems, doctrine and operational instructions, skills and commitment of the people in uniform and those who support them, communication and teamwork,

as well as quality of integration and management of all these things” (*Ibidem*: 33). The military organization operates by the same basic rules as any other civilian organization where every member knows its role and place within the organization, in order to achieve the common goal.

Conclusions

Similar to all existing researches in the field of management, the present research has limitations related to the methods used by respondents and researcher’s bias.

The survey questionnaire had the following limits:

- existence of dissimulated responses provided by respondents participating in the research due to lack of interest for research purposes;
- lack of contact between researcher and some respondents.

The analysis of a military organization characteristics involved gathering information from staff, analyzing them with the purpose of objective description of the situations they face compared to a model that can be taken as an example to be followed in certain respects. The U.S. military model is a desirable one, but should be kept in mind that they have much more experience in participating in armed conflicts (Vietnam, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq etc.). Thanks to the experience gained over the years, the U.S. military system has continuously adapted to the organizational requirements. At the basis of these changes is the large flow of existing personnel in the system, the desire to attract new volunteers recruits and to maintain trained professionals in the system for a longer period of time.

Permanent adaptation of the military organization to the civil society shows concern for the external operating environment and ensuring the ability of a military unit or a unitary system. Military organization shows flexibility, that can easily adapt to new situations and without failure occurred due to frequent society changes. This capability is essential for survival of the organization and its operational success in today's world.

Currently, the Romanian army takes over and adapts best practice examples of American and European military experience, organizational practices such as those of the military system, starting from recruitment programs and finishing with adapting the legislation regarding soldiers and professional sergeants, which extends the age of maintaining the personnel within the army.

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