



INTEGRATED APPROACH TO STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES – RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Georgi Georgiev

*SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATIONS INSTITUTE OF THE VASIL LEVSKI
NATIONAL MILITARY UNIVERSITY, 76, BULGARIA BLVD, VELIKO TARNOVO 5000,
E-mail: georgiev_ga@nvu.bg*

Abstract: *Considering the large number and variety of factors determining the efficiency and the strategic nature of human resource management in the sector, the publication presents the vision of the need for an integrated approach to the responsibilities of the two basic levels - national and institutional. Using this approach is seen as an opportunity to identify not only the most general framework, but also the new meaning and content of the processes of planning, recruitment, retention, use and discharge of people in the defence sector.*

This paper presents a vision on the basic responsibilities of the state towards the strategic management of human resources, as a basic process in the defence management.

Keywords: *strategic management, human resource, defence, responsibilities, national and institutional level.*

The effectiveness of the defence and of the strategic management of human resources in that area is determined largely by understanding the specific needs of the sector at the strategic level of government and the priority of meeting them. Under this circumstance, the responsibilities are transferred to the defence and are expressed in the general ability to transform the provided resources into defense capabilities at the institutional level in a purposeful, professional and impartial manner.

Therefore, the responsibilities in the strategic management of human resources in the area of defense should be specified at both the national and institutional levels. An integrated approach does not imply waiving the importance and the responsibilities arising from the actions and processes that take place in any element of the system **National interests – Government – Defence.**

The defence uses specific resources for its functioning. The importance criterion places those resources at the strategic level. People are the most significant of these strategic resources.

All resources used in defence have a high price – both literally and figuratively. They should therefore be managed by leaders with proven skills and extensive experience with the assistance of capable and knowledgeable experts. The transformation of resources into defence capabilities is most efficient when carried out by able, highly trained, professional, and motivated personnel. The state, as a protector and spokesman of the interests of the society, invests in the human resources development in the sector in order to ensure that their quantitative and qualitative parameters meet the current requirements of the geostrategic environment and of the national interests. These investments aim at building on and improving their knowledge, skills and experience. Unfortunately, this applies only for the time period of active employment of defence personnel. At present, the country does not have adequate legislation for and sufficient effective practices of using the defence human resources after their leaving the sector. The proposed Armed Forces Reserve Bill, subject to deliberations, partially compensates for the discrepancy between needs and reality. It is expected that its adoption and enforcement will solve a number of issues related to the temporary shortage of resources, including human, while performing specific tasks. However, the suggested bill, at least in its initial draft, allows for the use of only some of the existing real capabilities, and not for the full possible potential.

The investments in the recruiting and qualifying the human resource for the defence will have the highest return if the discharged defence personnel are appointed at other public sector positions. Thus the skills acquired or developed at the expense of state funds and under conditions created by the state and the civil society in its role of claimant and stakeholder of the public good defence, could be utilized for the time period resources are used in all the other industrial sectors. This would have disciplining effect both for the employees and for the employers. There are good practices for the employment of former defence sector personnel in the state administration, but they affect only a limited number of military personnel at the strategic management level after their discharge from active duty. Those practices result from both sound and reasonable staffing decisions as well as from spontaneous ones. The process can be opened simultaneously both in terms of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the human resources for the defence. In this case, however, there will be an increase of the complexity of the processes involved in the recruiting, selecting, training and overall evaluation of the career development, acquired professional skills and other specific characteristics of the human resources. If skillfully used, this opportunity could become a fundamental

principle for the strategic management of human resources, and defence could be even more efficiently linked to the other government sectors.

The introduction of such a practice, however, will require thorough preliminary preparation, establishment of unified organizational language, amendment of the existing legislation, as well as the coordination of the activities of all government institutions, security systems and military educational and scientific institutions. The analysis of accumulated experience and the comparison between economic and quality indicators, i.e. the assessment of the achieved benefits compared to the invested funds and resources, can fairly determine whether this becomes management policy applicable to all, or only to those who have accumulated certain experience. This complex process calls for the standardization of evaluation indicators that take into account personal qualities, skills, loyalty to the government institutions and sharing of universal values and civic virtues.

In the process of strategic management of human resources in the defence sector, the state has at least two functions with responsibilities arising from them - advertising of the sector and available occupations, and control over the acquired skills of the people who leave the defense sector and cannot or do not want to continue working in it or in the state administration.

After changing the recruitment procedures for the Armed Forces and the withdrawal of conscript military service, the relationship between the people and the army was almost completely interrupted. Dealing with the pressing issues of a difficult existence, together with the boredom caused by the change of socio-political system that has been undergoing for more than two decades, has alienated the average Bulgarians from the problems of the military and of the defense as a whole. Its necessity and the nature of the military service have become more and more unfamiliar to the public. Even the limited number of people closest to the employed in the sector is becoming smaller due to the continuous process of downsizing the Armed Forces. All of the above, along with the fact that almost 70 years Bulgaria has been developed in conditions different from war, creates a false sense of security.

It, the security, in the broadest sense of the word, is every so often perceived as granted, as though from above, as something which is the commitment of world leaders, as the result of coincidence, as anything but an object of our own thinking and behavioral patterns. The attitude changes when the country is hit by a natural or other disaster, but this only lasts very briefly. When such a situation occurs, the specific capabilities of the security and defense sectors are used, but unfortunately they are perceived by many as something granted, as capabilities the state simply "must have". Even at such times, little is said to explain how such capabilities are acquired and maintained, or what their actual cost is. Negativism is added to this due to the unconsciously indifferent attitude. Most often this happens in the context of various public

debates. They remind the public that the defence requires a lot of money, and vice versa - that the acquisition and maintenance of defense capabilities does not require so much funds - in any case not as much as military expertise claims is necessary. The most serious argument in favour of such a stance is the fact that Bulgaria has already been included in the Europe and NATO collective security systems. The most reactionary circles and entities even resort to the so-called black PR, expressing the opinion that the funds spent for defence can be used for social activities, healthcare, training and requalifying of the unemployed and of people with disabilities, etc., which generates further negative attitudes towards the sector and the Armed Forces. Another argument that always instigates serious debate in these periodical campaigns is the provision of the so-called "privileges" to the military - early retirement, severance payments when discharging from active duty, the right to purchase a home at preferential prices - although the scale of this process became negligible long ago. Negativism towards the defence sector and the capabilities generated in it is "legalized" and spread very quickly to the national level by the "analyses" of "experts", "observers" and "specialists" in the field of security, as well as by various politicians. All of them en masse, and unanimously, which is otherwise very difficult to achieve when solving other vital issues for our society, claim that Bulgaria has no enemies, but only friends, partners and associates, and therefore it is not expected that in the next 10-15 years the country will be involved or will wish to participate in an armed conflict. It is paradoxical that all this is happening at the background of forecasts and already unmistakable recognition of the first signs of impending resource wars.

In order to counteract to these processes and phenomena and their highly destructive for the country strategic impact, as well as to preserve the core traditions of the Bulgarian people, the defence sector and the armed forces need constant positive advertising campaign at the national level. All positive practices and manifestations of professionalism should be adequately and promptly presented to the public, along with the periodically published analyses for the status of the sector and the achievement of its goals and objectives. The advertising should include demonstrations of mastering the basic military knowledge, skills and abilities, which are generally the most attractive, especially for young people, and the capabilities of the military educational and scientific institutions, the open house days, practical demonstrations, the days of free medical examinations by mobile teams in different locations throughout the country.

The most important principles of advertising which must be followed are continuity, comprehensiveness, accessibility and sense of measure of the messages targeted to a particular labour pool, relevance to the realities in the sector. Furthermore, it should be attractive in its manifestations and be delivered in all possible ways, so that to cause, invoke and maintain interest and respect

for the defence and the Armed Forces and their shared values associated with patriotic education. There is also the good opportunity for the advertising campaign to promote the important historical events, facts and persons, as well as information about the interesting technology used in warfare. A flexible approach should be applied in this information flow to the presentation of the opportunities for professional and personal development of the human resources in the defense sector.

The importance of advertising has been the subject of observations and studies since the nineteenth century, when it began to be used for commercial purposes. Experience shows it can be directed not only to the defence sector, but also to become part of a much broader campaign organized and conducted at the national level in the interest of various government institutions for the promotion of other professions of public importance - medicine, education, security services, and as far as possible, professions in various fields of science and the social sphere. Combined with a good social policy and the opportunity to use various financial, credit and other preferences for the period of implementation of these professions and acquisition of the required qualifications for their practising, advertising would contribute to the implementation of a systematic approach not only in the state administration, but in all sectors of public importance.

Summarizing the view on the impact of advertising on the effectiveness of human resource management in the defense sector, it should be noted again that this particular type of activity should not only be the responsibility of management in the sector, but to be a priority for the government within the framework of its policy for attracting human resources and qualifying capable practitioners for the professions of strategic public importance.

Best results in advertising that could successfully be used in the strategic management of human resources can be achieved if this activity is assigned to specialized structures. The personnel of such structures should comprise highly motivated, qualified advertising specialists - military and civilian, with at least 10-15 years of experience in the field of defence and positive attitude towards it. Outsourcing as an approach is to be strongly discouraged. An alternative to it is training and further qualifying people, loyal to the sector, so that they acquire the required educational background and qualifications under the terms of the provision of the Republic of Bulgaria Defence and Armed Forces Act that sets forth the opportunity for the Ministry of Defence to grant target scholarships in return for employment for a specified time period, aiming at the longest possible duration.

The technological connectivity of the activities at the state and institutional levels is organizationally completed through controlling the acquired defence capabilities. The acquisition, storage and use of tangible fixed assets and property are carried out in compliance with the current legislation, which is

effective enough. The big issue that should be resolved in the nearest possible future is the abilities that the people have acquired. Some of these are abilities that can ensure their holders employment in other segments of the labor market. Other specific abilities, however, are mastered while practising and participating in activities related to the combat training of military units and are in their essence, fighting skills. Such skills, as well as the information relating to the organizational development and maintenance of defense capabilities, which has been received by the people employed in the sector in the course of their work, represent a potential for carrying out targeted destructive activities not only against the defence sector, but also against the state and society after those people retire from active duty. Information loses its relevance because of the natural process of its renewal [6], but the basic military and professional skills are usually retained for life. The protection of official secrets and classified information is a process determined by the applicable standards, including the ones regulating prevention. Special attention is focused on personnel who had had access to NATO information. However, prevention of using the acquired specialized and fighting skills after leaving the defense sector does not exist, legislative initiative is lacking, and the senior public management and the civil society do not care. In the context of this indifference, one additional risk is the fact that after the military personnel transfer in the reserve, or when the civilian employees leave the defence sector, these people's income usually decreases significantly. This makes them look for all sorts of sources of additional income. The need for physical survival or the previously suppression urge for proper expression and adequate positive evaluation of the possessed capabilities can easily become a motive for risky, and even illegal activities against payment, or can simply provoke precarious behavior. If the state does not change that status quo, it allows for its use to the benefit of organizations and individuals engaged in illegal activity, including activity against the state and the national interests.

The specialized skills acquired while working in the defence sector can turn into a problem in another potentially hazardous for the society behavioural model.

It is absolutely possible the stress, accumulated at work, to trigger various mental disorders. The variation of their manifestation may range from harmless behavior, not affecting other people and causing no material damage, to acts of mass murder or other destructive actions on a large scale and having consequences for society. There is already a consistent trend that develops at a rate causing concern worldwide. In recent years, the officially announced instances of such disorders have increased significantly and the number of casualties and victims in each incident varies from a few to several hundred people. In more than half of these cases, the acts of violence were carried out by former or current military personnel or police officers, i.e. by people who had been trained and qualified for this.

In the Armed Forces, psychological advice is provided to the personnel, including civilian employees, upon request by their commanders or superiors or there is recognized need for it. Such advice is provided, however, only for the people working under an effective employment contract. Upon its termination, this specialized care for people also ceases. Mental disorders can be triggered after leaving the defence sector even as a result of the impact of a mild irritant. Most often this is a manifestation of the cumulative effects of the negative emotions and the irreversible changes in the psyche associated with occupational stress. When this accumulation is combined with other problems that cause subjective distress and feelings of inferiority and uselessness, whose development is favoured by leaving the active service, the risk of triggering such mental disorders increases significantly. The negative attitudes, conducive to the emerging of situations of the type described are further amplified when the termination of the contract is related to personality conflicts, ill-considered amendments of the current legislation specifying the modalities and mechanisms of personnel policy or just when a political decision is enforced which is not harmonized with the national and sectoral legislation, which does not contribute to the achievement of national interests and priorities or which does not comply with the expertise of the military strategy and warfare. In such cases, in order not to bear the negative consequences of decisions and supporting activities that often lead to the reduction of defense capabilities, a PR-campaign is organized to announce the ongoing changes for pressing. The main arguments of such a campaign are the need to maintain the economic balance under the conditions of financial resource deficit and the growing need of modernizing the sector. The process is described as disposal of excess resources, or as a process carried out as the result of the urgent need for securing financial resources for modernization. It is claimed the quality of human resources will compensate the quantitative shortage. Thus, indirectly, the personnel discharged from the defence sector, begin subconsciously to be perceived by society as unable to accept the new challenges. The exact word that Bulgarian mentality uses to describe this condition is "incompetence". The person who is deemed incompetent and discharged from the defense sector finds it very difficult, at least in the first months after this act, to land a new job in the country. As a result, their anxiety increases, and this provokes many negative individual mental processes, conditions, attitudes and behaviors, i.e. the risk of triggering mental disorders increases significantly.

The negative attitudes resulting from the indifference of the state and the public to the abovementioned problem are further deepened due to the legislative initiative. The Republic of Bulgaria Defense and Armed Forces Act (Art. 162, item 3) and the Regulation for the Implementation of the Republic of Bulgaria Defense and Armed Forces Act (Art. 77, para 1) set forth that the military service contract be terminated where "incapacity or psychological

unfitness are established by the military medical authorities, respectively by the authorities under Art. 141, para. 3". Of course, compensations are paid out in such cases but they do not ensure that the affected people will be able to fully socialize or will become less dangerous to society. It is necessary to provide adequate specialized care for life for people caught in such a situation, especially if the reason is the direct fulfillment of duties in the defence and the armed forces. This specialized care should comprise healthcare, including psychiatric care, psychological support, vocational rehabilitation and socialization. Specialized programs have to be developed for this purpose.

The control over the information and individual abilities acquired by the soldiers and former civilian employees that transfer to the reserve is an issue not only to for the defence sector. Unfortunately, this fact is realized only when irreversible changes occur and as a result the society has to suffer damage or casualties. Sharing the strategic view that defence is one of the various sectors of the state apparatus, determines the need for solving the issue in cooperation with those remaining sectors. The effectiveness of this solution will define whether the issue becomes a problem.

The institutions of higher military education (as defined in the Higher Education Act) operate in the competitive market of higher education. This market becomes more and more aggressive, and the imperfections of the Faculty Development Act allow the acquisition of scientific qualifications and implementation of procedures for assignment of academic positions in a relatively short period of time in Higher Education Area 9 "Security", which, until recently was considered traditionally a "military" area. It provides professional qualification in the field of national security and defence, military warfare, management of defence resources, the protection of people and critical infrastructure from crises of military and non-military nature, crises management, air traffic control, training of pilots, and etc. As a result of this process, there is a leak of intellectual potential and expertise from the military educational and scientific institutions to civilian universities. There is also the reverse process.

Education is an open system, but restrictions could be introduced for awarding educational degrees and qualifications in Higher Education Area 9 "Security" for several reasons, listed below.

The statutory principle of academic autonomy in the functioning of universities and the lack of a standard, setting the body of knowledge necessary for the effective exercise of a profession in the defence sector, is practically encroaching the ability to control what and how is taught in Higher Education Area 9 "Security" in the civilian, and especially, in private universities.

Here are a few comparisons: the curricula in military educational institutions are consistent with the requirements of stakeholders and future employers and approved by two ministers – the Minister of Defense and the

Minister of Education. Moreover, no graduate of the military university or college can advance in their career without the relevant practical experience - this is guaranteed by the structure and content of curricula, as well as by the legal restrictions for a minimum stay in rank and position, set forth in the Republic of Bulgaria Defence and Armed Forces Act. There are no such legal requirements applicable to people outside the defence sector when employing them in the sector. Restrictions can be placed only through the job description for a particular position. This does not exclude the possibility that people are hired in the defence of directly after their graduation from university.

The principle of academic autonomy grants freedom to the teaching in civilian universities, including content taught and methodological approaches applied. There is no unified national standard setting:

- a minimum volume of knowledge necessary for effective performance of employees in the defence sector;
- the structure and content of the material in the context of the above;
- the kind of knowledge is necessary to be acquired and the kind of knowledge which contradicts the national interests, priorities and national security of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Under such conditions, even though it may seem paradoxical, it is not impossible for a Bulgarian university or college to train specialists so that they obtain European diplomas, but when employed in the defense sector, those specialists do not work for it constructively but destructively - deliberately or due to lack of the necessary knowledge.

It is a well-established practice worldwide all the related to the security and defense of the country, including the specialized knowledge and education, to be under its immediate control. Bulgaria should not be an exception.

Introducing, through legislation, a regime of restriction in order to achieve pragmatism in the acquisition of the educational degrees and qualifications required for the practicing of professions in the defense sector, is an urgent necessity. There is an already established analogue - any material production pertaining to the defence sector is subject to a strict licensing regime, compliance with established industry standards, and quality and sales control.

All of the above argues in support of the vision of the supremacy of national interests over the state governance and the strategic management of defence. Although the definition of national interests is not the subject of this publication, in conclusion it should once again be emphasized that communication, both in its direct and broader general meaning, between the state government [7] and the strategic management of the defence should be continuous, two-way, constructive and conducted professionally - as a process of exchange of information and expertise. Even the best military strategy of the country [8] can prove ineffective if not supported with understanding and continuity on behalf of the state administration. The opposite is also true.

Therefore, the subject of monitoring, evaluation and analysis of the author are the responsibilities at both the national and sectoral level. The results will be presented in a series of subsequent publications.

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- [6]. The period for which it is considered that the information directly related to the operation of the country's defence sector retains its relevance is up to 5 (five) years and is determined by the level of access and the occupied position.
- [7]. Here the collective notion 'state government' means the legislative, executive and judicial powers – as outlined in the classical theory for the division of powers by Charles Montesquieu from 1748.
- [8]. The term here is to be understood as the fundamental part of the military warfare – theory and practice, whose subject is the military security of the country.