RESTRUCTURATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

New organization structures or new thinking structures?

The restructuration of the Armed Forces is a permanent and integral process that implies thinking through actions with the purpose of dealing with new tasks and responsibilities

KEY WORDS: **RESTRUCTURATION / ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES / LEARNING ORGANIZATION**

By **Daniel Oscar Nuñez and Jorge Daniel Vilas**

LEGAL FRAMEWORK BACKGROUND

After the Malvinas War and after five years of having restored democracy with the enactment of Law No. 23554 of National Defense (in April, 1988) and the subsequent Law No. 24059 of Domestic Security (in January, 1992), a process of change in the military instrument started with the purpose of turning a structure and culture of more than 70 years into an effective tool of the republic.

With the discontinuation of the Mandatory Military Service on August 31, 1994, military staff started their professional career and with Law No. 24948 of Restructuration of Armed Forces passed in February, 1998, grounds for the reorganization and structuring of the armed forces of our country were established. This was implemented since 2004 and its last result was the definition of the military instrument as the closing of the first cycle of strategic planning through Executive Order 1729/2007, "Cycle for Planning National Defense" and Executive Order 1714/2009 "Guidelines for National Defense Policy".

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF RESTRUCTURATION?

As we have explained before, the two laws that give essential guidelines for the functioning of the armed forces were enacted during two different administrations: the National Defense Law was enacted during Ricardo Alfonsin's administration and the Domestic Security Law was enacted during Carlos Menem's administration.

At the beginning, both had the purpose of "protecting vital interests of the Argentine nation" and aimed at "consolidating and increasing spiritual and material capacities that turn a deterrent strategy into an efficient one, contributing to peacekeeping and international security, in particular, for our continent".

In this way, we can see how the legal framework prepares the way for the armed forces to work on Peace Missions of the United Nations, especially in our continent and keeps the concept of deterrence mentioned in prior documents.

It also introduces the priority of "joint action and operational integration of forces" giving a greater level of maturity to the military instrument after the lessons learned in the South Atlantic Conflict of 1982.

Moreover, it clearly shows scenarios for the use of the Military Instrument:
> Conventional operations in defense of vital interests of the Nation
> Operations within the framework of the United Nations
> Support operations for the community of the nation or

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friendly countries

The Law for National Defense establishes a "likely development of a defense system within the framework of Mercosur for the purposes of considering the requirements that may arise from those agreements when dealing with the restructuration of the Armed Forces", a concept that is currently being developed within the framework of the Union of South American Nations (Unasur, in its Spanish acronym).

As mentioned in prior documents, it states that "rapid deployment capacity" will be a priority and highlights that, as regards joint work, "the formation of groups of combined forces or Task Forces above pure units will be a priority".

Moreover, it aims at rationalization of military expenses in the sense that "the Armed Forces will share facilities for a better use of installed capacity" and as regards staff, it expresses that "quality will prevail over number".

This is precisely the key issue of restructuration as creating new organization guidelines and a new doctrine for the use of armed forces is a mainly intellectual process, but planning how the Nation will carry out this new organization with the incorporation of new technologies, equipment and a new staff policy must be coherent in economic and financial terms so as to be kept throughout the years.

Restructuration, reorganization and change of culture are terms that are common to any organization, but the question is: do all organizations understand changes in the same way? What is being done for organizational change and cultural change in the Argentine armed forces?

Each member of the organization should be able to answer this last question, at least, if it is true that there is an organizational and cultural change.

Theories of change are constantly evolving and Argentine Armed Forces have already made their first actions to update themselves and provide a scientific basis to this change. Military staff is being trained at national universities that are leaders in organizational coaching and cultural change.

Mexican Armed Forces have already started their way to "learning organizations", as it happens in the United States, Great Britain and Europe in general. It seems to be

a new concept, but it is not. The purpose is to generate and implement these masterly processes that allowed these military organizations to adapt to their reality and to be effective in the Argentine armed forces.

LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS: NEW THINKING STRUCTURES

Pasteur's phrase "luck only favours trained minds" could not be more telling: both people and organizations that keep "trained minds" that learn constantly are the only ones that can take opportunities when they appear.

With the development of neuroscience, there have been scientific grounds for processes of thinking, feelings and human behavior, being able to understand why people act as they do. This applies to persons and the organizations they form and includes armed forces and the way to conduct them.

As Peter Drucker stated[1]: "the centre of a society, economy and modern community is not technology. It is not information. It is not productivity. It is the institution conducted as the part of society that produces results".

The concept of "smart company" or "learning organization" is developed within the administration of organizations, the same occurs with the tools to get this level of operation.

Renewal must be promoted and accepted, that is, acquired by all members of our Armed Forces from the highest level of conduction to levels of implementation.

However, keeping individual qualities to successfully use said tools is far from being good. Awareness necessary to keep a high performance organization is key for success and requires values such as ethics, psychological maturity, integral world view[2].

Being aware implies going through the learning path to become aware of the gap between reality and desire. Also, it is important to state what is necessary in order to get what has been desired and to commit to accomplish that by taking responsibilities, allowing oneself to make mistakes, seeking help and allotting time and resources for that purpose.

In military life, the organizational culture seems to be against volitional learning acts. Saying "I don't know", "I ignore this" or "I am not capable of doing this" immediately discredits someone for any relevant task, which makes it necessary to make changes until we learn what we had not learned yet without anyone realizing or, worse than that, "nobody realizes I don't know that".

When people feel they risk something they value, the instinct for self-preservation is activated to protect them. When referring to learn, we refer to change, to break the balance between our current position; and resistance to change is strengthened by:

〉 *Being blind to one self's incompetence so "I do not need to learn anything"*
〉 *Fear to expose myself and break my image*
〉 *Embarrassment as fear to being foolish for not knowing something*
〉 *Temptation to blame factors outside my control for difficulties*

> *Arrogance of the person who knows everything*
> *Laziness to avoid making an effort to learn*
> *Impatience and boredom for not getting quick accomplishments*
> *Distrust in other people or oneself*
> *Anger and confusion of that one who distrusts, "I do not understand and I do not like this"[3].*

Whenever a position is at risk with many years of profession, a promotion position, a retirement pension, self- protection mechanisms may take control of actions in an unimaginable manner. If they are overcome, knowledge is an award, and this does not refer to something in particular or specific, but to how to learn to learn and this is the key to effectiveness.

The true change of the armed forces does not lie in its organization or distribution, but to become a learning organization. These are institutions that aim at ongoing learning on a daily basis, excellence as a lifestyle and dedication to service.

This type of organization allows for the integral development of all its members at the highest level a person can reach or desires to reach, promoting cohesion, sense of justice, setting standards and maintaining purposes, boosting and reaching a proper organizational environment with creativity and tolerance at all levels.

WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED?

Although laws have been preparing for change for more than 20 years, this cannot happen without motivation.

Grounds of any organization lie in inner values of the people that form it and shape its organizational culture.

Modifying it implies changing, among other aspects, habits and rituals of the people that are members of the organization.

Theories of organizational change claim that changes start from higher levels and are carried out by lower levels. That is, higher authorities set them as a priority and once the organization is in line and has a common vision, they are carried out mainly from lower levels upwards.

Promoting a renovation of culture does not imply destruction of the old one in order to impose an opposite one. This has to be understood as going back to key principles, eternal values and to give it a new life according to the evolution of all other aspects of the Nation.

HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE THIS?

In his essay about "The Learning Organization", José Guadalupe Vargas Hernández states that the "Learning Organization aims at taking advantage of knowledge in a social organization by means of proper management. This implies structural and behavior changes".

Here we find ourselves again with the concept of restructuration, not in a physical sense but in the sense of

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getting a conceptual and mental openness that translates into the adoption of new specific behaviour of learning organizations[4].

According to Sullivan and Harper, "commitment by all members of the organization" is necessary, bearing in mind that "the key issue is always people" and that organizations that reach a successful transition to the new times share the following ideals:

> "A genuine passion for what they do.
> A sense of evolution rather than being accompanied by a sound sense of emergency.
> Clear vision that allows to take risks –to dare to be successful- supported by values and connected to the future by a strategic construction in which people believe.
> Learning from everything they do
> A deep and lasting belief in people without which all words and good intentions lack sense"[5].

In order to make this reform, the main points of this change must be supported by:

> Proper management: This is not only a responsibility of leaders that are at the top of institutions, but of any person who has any task, from the Head of the greatest unit within the organization to the most modern petty officer who is in charge of supervising daily activities. We need to permanently find the reasons why we need to make our efforts giving importance to all activities, even those that seem to be less complex and to communicate those reasons to those around us.

We can imagine an organization in which its leaders rethink the way in which its processes are carried out and state to their subordinates: How would you carry out

1. Drucker, Peter, *Management Challenges for the 21 century,* Harper Business, USA, 1999.
2. Kofman, Fredy, *Metamanagment,* Grito Sagrado, Buenos Aires, 2007.
3. Kofman, Fredy, op. cit.
4. Vargas Hernández, José G., La Organización Aprendiente. Hitos de Ciencias Económico Administrativas, pp. 19: 33-40, N° 19, September- December, Mexico, 2001. Available at http://www.publicaciones.ujat.mx/publicaciones/hitos/ediciones/19/organizacion.pdf
5. Sullivan, Gordon & Harper, Michael, *La Esperanza no es un método,* Editorial Norma, Bogotá, Colombia, 1998.

"The Learning Organization aims at taking advantage of knowledge in a social organization by means of proper management. This implies structural and behavior changes".

things if you had the power to decide and why would you change those procedures?"

Then, what these leaders must do is to manage said improvement, use all their knowledge and power within the organization so that it can be implemented, but not carried out. As Stephen Covey stated, they must "prepare for" but not fell trees. This will be done by operators of the systems they want to improve.

⟩ **Commitment of everyone within the organization:** when management previously mentioned starts to show results, although they may be little achievements obtained by the change proposed, the motto by Norman Schwarzkopf: "Failure may be caught but success is infectious"[7].

⟩ **The key issue is always people:** these little achievements need to be obtained by actual persons. People who carry out right actions, transfer their knowledge and experience in a broad manner thus enlightening their surroundings and beyond. They are recognized for their contributions allowing to increase enthusiasm for achievements and using this to reach new horizons.

People must do their work in the best possible manner, caring at all levels for those around them (higher authorities and subordinates) so that they work as well as they can, congratulating them on right actions of those which we are responsible of and observing their mistakes privately respecting their feelings and desires.

When activities become repetitive, when we are far from our beloved ones, when the environment is uncomfortable or hostile, it is necessary to make people feel how important their work is, even if it is small tasks.

In more than one opportunity, it was necessary to remind those who cooked and cleaned in the air Unit deployed in Haiti that if they did not carry out their activities consciously, all staff could get sick and, therefore, the mission could not be carried out nor a rescue parachutist or a load assistant or our technicians could do maintenance and allow to put aircraft in flight lines. That is, everything could remain on land if plates were not properly washed.

People are the center of gravity in which not only money must be invested, but also time and dedication, it is necessary for subsequent generations to be better than the previous ones so that organizations can grow on a daily basis. Creativity must be promoted trying to improve and assuring that "punishment for failure is not greater than punishment for doing nothing"[8].

⟩ **Joy for learning from everything they do:** to listen and encourage proposals of all members of the organization, without disregarding any of them, as there are not improper proposals or questions, but wrong answers and attitudes, for example, not listening to those we think know less.

Once it is possible to enjoy learning, a virtuous cycle opens at all levels because the one who teaches feels committed to deliver the best of them and, also, to learn from those who deliver their knowledge in those aspects of which they have less knowledge.

In order to give some light to these concepts, a professor from Harvard, David Garvin[9] provides a broader definition of what a learning organization is: "It is an organization with the capacity to create, acquire and transfer knowledge and to modify their behavior new knowledge and points of view".

In order to structure what has been previously expressed in this type of "learning organization", it is necessary to take into consideration six aspects, according to Garvin[10]:

1. **To deeply understand the context of the task:** this does not refer to mere comprehension and distribution of physical space. This action lies in the depth of the activities carried out by the organization and the different relations that exist in the organization and outside.

In order to get this knowledge, three different and additional tasks must be carried out:

a) Research: to search information about the task that is being carried out on the Internet, books, journals and publications in order to improve them.
b) Questions: sometimes deep knowledge of the tasks being carried out is found in the minds of the most experienced people. The important thing is to learn

6. Covey, Stephen R., The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: restoring the Character ethic, Copyright Stephen Covey, USA, 1990.
7. Conference recorded on February 23, 1998, in Phoenix, AZ during the meeting of Amerisource Corp.'s Management Meeting. It was known as the "lesson of leadership by General Norman Schwarzkopf". Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgWCdqKyy-k
8. Thompson, Charles "Chic", La gran idea: guía práctica del pensamiento creativo, Ediciones Granica, España, 1994.
9. Garvin, David A., "Building a Learning Organization", Harvard Business Review, July- August, 1993.

This task is far from being simple, it is actually hard and reflected in small things, small achievements from personal levels to the levels of a Department, then Direction and going upwards in size and complexity within the institutional ladder.

from them and try to leave documents for current and future generations.

c) Observation: it is very important to see what people do in their daily activities because many times for social or psychological reasons, some of them do not like to teach or show how they carry out their tasks.

To learn from best practices of other organizations: benchmarking is not only focused on copying best practices, or the best ways in which other organizations carry out the same tasks as oneself, this is also an intellectual inspiration, "food for thought", in order to plan new improvement and to develop more current goals to be achieved.

2. **To learn from their own experiences and their own history:** all organizations have made mistakes as well as right things. It is extremely important to learn from

both situations in order to strengthen positive attitudes and leave negative attitudes aside. As George Santayana stated: "Those who do not remember the past may tend to repeat it".

3. **To experience new perspectives:** it is not necessary to be in the business of advertising or to be a creative designer of a company in order to develop this aspect.

It is necessary to open our minds to new perspectives; this is an exercise that implies study and commitment. It is necessary to know existing paradigms in order to develop its changes or, why not, to make a revolution towards the opposite situation as circumstances and the use of different concepts change with time.

A guru of quality management, Walter Shewhart, worked for many years for Bell Telephone and the use of quality management in the military field.

During the years he worked at that company, he had to supervise the manufacture of the headphones that crews of bombers used during World War II for communication.

After studying through statistics the average of the cranium sizes of crew members, he realized that the average in the natural processes explain many things, but

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10. Garvin, David, Building a More Effective Learning Organization (Longer Version), National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute 2005- Organizational learning in Wild fire featuring Learning in Action, 2005. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoMNq4Tijto.
11. Garvin, David, op. cit.

cannot be determining for individual cases because, as in this case, there are very few people who had an "average head size".

This is why he was able to prove, in the field of the manufacturing of these headphones, that most crew members found them big, or small and he devoted himself to design headphones with an adapting arch so that they could extend or get smaller within a huge amplitude around that cranium size. It was a breakthrough for those times during which everything had to be within average ranks.

Until Shewhart was able to persuade his bosses of that new perspective and to stop production in order to readapt matrices, thousands of headphones were delivered to flight crews that adapted them in the following manner: those to whom headphones were big flew with a cap and those to whom they were small used a small biretta. This can be observed in this picture of the film "Memphis Belle", a popular story about a B-17 Bomber missions in the European front during World War II.

4. **To promote resolution of conflicts in a systematic manner:** it is necessary to teach and promote the use of statistical methods, at least the most simple ones and the organization of information processes with the purpose of incorporating basic data that will be used to solve problems of our institutions, disregarding, as main method basis, intuition: "I think that we should more or less do this" and traditional habits: "this has always been done like this".

Moreover, it is useful to use the Demming cycle (known as PDCA circle) as it is an ongoing quality improvement tactic in four steps, based on a concept created by Walter A. Shewhart.

PDCA is the acronym for Plan, Do, Check, Act.

Also, these four steps of the PDCA cycle were thoroughly developed by Japanese management that named

it **"the seven steps of Quality Path"**[12] in the implementation of Quality Circles in their companies.

This is a powerful tool used not only to solve problems, but to improve any type of task or administration.

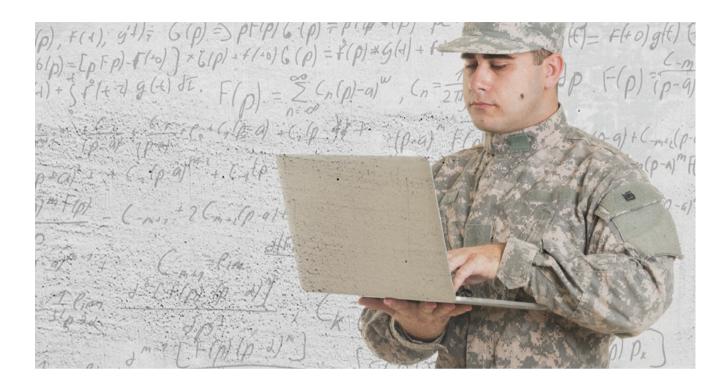It is divided as follows:
a) Plan
   In this stage, it is necessary to:
   1) Select the topic to be dealt with
   2) Understand the situation status and set a goal
   3) Set the activities plan
   4) Analyze causes
b) Do
   5) Previously examine and then implement measures previously determined and that will solve the problem or allow for improvement
c) Verify
   6) Assess effectiveness of what has been implemented and, if goals have not been reached, *to try everything again* (reexamine from step 1 and onwards).
d) Act
   7) Having verified that goals to solve problems or improve systems have been achieved, it is necessary to set standards for the action and implement it in a permanent manner.

5. **To transfer knowledge throughout the organization:** as an example, in the military aeronautic context, it is usual, within what is known as "meeting prior to flight", the reading and discussion of resolutions of research carried out by boards of aviation accidents in order to spread knowledge of the causes of those accidents for the purposes not to repeat them.

Unfortunately, these events also bring painful lessons for the loss of lives and air materials. However, is it possible to do the same with right actions? How about spreading best practices from one context to another one carrying out an internal benchmarking process to provide the organization with "food for thought"?

Organizations that are similar to ours, such as the US Army, have the concept of AAR (After Action Review), "a method that allows them to grasp lessons from an event or project and apply those lessons to others"[13], severe manner

12. Fukui, Ryu et.al., Total Quality Administration Manual and Quality Control Circles, Volume II, Japanese Development Bank, October 2003. Available at: https://www.inacal.org.uy/files/userfiles/file/VII_%20ManualACTyCCC.pdfDesarrollo, Volume II, Japanese Bank.
13. Darling, Maryling et.al., "Learning in the Thick of It", Harvard Business Review, The High Performance Organization, July- August, 2005.

that is constant, permanent and used at NTC (National Training Center), where forces are being trained before being deployed to real combat field (known as BLUFOR) with an opponent that can change from conventional to irregular according to the criteria of the actual future opponent (known as OPFOR=US Army Opposing Force).

Lessons learned from those actions are spread all around the organization, without mentioning members as "guilty" of mistakes and it has been seen that when they are shown in public to those who make mistakes, they try to apologize for their mistakes and a very important step of the learning process is missed.

WE SHOULD START TODAY

Culture does not change from one day to the other. In order to create habits, it is necessary to constantly repeat

good practices so as these habits may allow to become the organizational culture of people being promoted in the institutional ladder until it turns into culture.

Also, change cannot be revolutionary; it must be small and gradual so as not to change institutions that need to acquire these changes in a rapid manner.

This is far from being simple, it is actually hard and reflected in small things, small achievements from personal levels to the levels of a Department, then Direction and going upwards in size and complexity within the institutional ladder.

We should start today in a slow manner "no hurry and no pause" as tomorrow is waiting for us and we should account for our actions to our future generations.

› REFEREED ARTICLE

Jorge Daniel Vilas
Vice Commodore of the Argentine Air Force. Staff Officer. Bachelor in Air and Aerospace Systems. He took the Specialization in Total Quality Management at Companies and the Master Core in Finance at Universidad del Salvador. He is currently serving as Head of the Course of Specialization in Operational Strategy and Joint Military Planning at the Joint Staff College.

Daniel Oscar Nuñez
Captain of the Argentine Navy. Staff Officer. Bachelor in Navy Air Systems. Organizational Coach graduated from Universidad del Salvador. Specialist in investment projects for Defense graduated from Aeronautic University Institute. Between 2010 and 2013, he served in Navy Plans taking part of the Military Capacities Project (1st cycle). He is currently serving as Student Coordination Secretary at the Joint Staff College.