

ASSESSING MILITARY READINESS IN NATIONAL ARMY OF REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA'S UNITS – METHODS AND CHALLENGES

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Republic of Moldova

In 2021, in the Republic of Moldova anticipated Parliamentary elections, which were won by the pro-European political party “Party Action and Solidarity” were held. After the election of the Moldova’s Government, that was formed from the parliamentary majority, the governance program was entitled “Good Times”. As a result entire nation is expecting changes in their level of life, expended social benefits, increased salaries and pensions, etc. However the “Good Times” came in not really a good period. Complex and complicated regional situation, energy crises, COVID-19 pandemics, factors that affect directly and indirectly the national security. In times like this, is critical for the country’s key decision making authorities and decision makers to understand the undisputed importance of having a ready military force that can step-up in any situation, from providing territorial integrity to helping authorities deal in any emergency situations, but all that requires political maturity, commitment, resources allocation, and a desire to evolve and prosper as a nation.

In 2018, in the Republic of Moldova new National Defense and Military Strategies were ratified by the Parliament and Government respectively. These documents stipulate new threats and a new set of objectives that the National Army must accomplish. However, not even after 30 years of existence and continuous foreign assistance, the common task list for the units in the National Army had not been developed, standards were not properly set, and clear guidance of what is expected from a unit to execute is not quite clear. Finally, considering the continuously evolving operational environment and threats in the region, the existing capabilities in National Army are not sufficient to provide proper protection of the state’s sovereignty and its territorial borders. Nor these capabilities exist to conduct the adequate peacekeeping operations in the Transnistrian Region, to support civil authorities in case of emergency, or to participate in multinational peacekeeping operations abroad, being fully interoperable with its strategic partners.

This work provides an overview of relevant strategic documents of the Republic of Moldova, and examples of theoretical approaches on determining/evaluating readiness status of a military unit/force. The main objective of this

work is to provide the Military Decision Makers with some recommendations on changing the current state of affairs in the field of readiness assessment of the military units. The results should be taken into consideration in order to obtain efficient transformation, a process that has already started in the National Army. With the recommendation exposed in this work, such as: development of mission essential task list, development of national regulation for evaluation of the unit's readiness, development of evaluating criteria, establishment of readiness levels, proper equipping and training along with functional task-organization, and last but not list extend of the social benefits packages for the all personnel working in the Defense Institutions, it is absolutely possible to develop and maintain ready forces to support all national interests.

Key words: *readiness, assessment, resource allocation, national interest.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, there have been different definitions for readiness that have changed over time, and have varied in specificity [1], mostly because of the quickly changing environment in which nations are operating and continuously updated national interests that nations establish for them considering increasing effects of the globalization. Nations must maintain its forces continuous readiness status and ensure that they are capable of operating in order to support accomplishments of each national interest. It is essential that required/desired level of readiness is maintained so that the force is capable of serving and defending the nation as well as to justify that the tax money is well spent [2]. The United States of America's DoD officially defines the term *readiness* in Joint Publication 1 (JP 1) as "the ability

of military forces to fight and meet the demands of assigned missions" [3], in simple words, the military *readiness* is the military's capacity to engage in combat and fulfil assigned missions and tasks. Therefore it is vital to have means to measure the combat readiness of the military force. This measure should indicate the force capability and status of operability with a continuous feedback in order to improve its activities and processes. To maintain that essential element of sovereignty of any states, it is important that the measure of combat readiness must be comprehensive enough to measure the elements contributing to the combat readiness of the military force [4].

However, considering current environment and predominantly applied joint approach towards states defense and security, the

term *readiness* is not exclusively used by the defense communities. During the past two decades, it has become increasingly common to see the word readiness used as an alternative expression for *preparedness* throughout both the public and private sectors [5], mainly referring to the issues that are related with the national security. As a result of increasing implication of military forces in different activities that are oriented towards supporting central and local authorities, the term *readiness* has largely been used related to the military force's ability to respond in a national emergency situation, natural disaster, or other considerably threatening events. In order to identify the directions that military force has to support, depending on each state's strategic framework, the military are extracting all needed information from a few strategic documents that usually are: National Military Strategy (NMS), National Defense Strategy (NDS), and National Security Strategy (NSS), that refine ultimately the states Military Doctrine and prepare the force for not only maintaining its *ability to fight and win*, anywhere, and at any given time, but also to provide the needed support for the entire population in an emergency situation.

According to the USA's DoD, one of the four main pillars that determine the military capability is the readiness, the remaining three

being force structure, modernization and sustainability. Obviously readiness and sustainability being the main once and most expensive. All of those four pillars are very important and might form another subject of discussion, while in this work, the main focus will be on readiness. Readiness is achieved through a large variety of means, including and not limited to:

- Training and practice;
- Force structure mix (providing service units to support combat units);
- Mobilization, when necessary;
- Responsive management of available resources in order to meet all required needs [6].

Furthermore, the USA DoD is suggesting a glimpse on readiness through the three main words that define the term readiness, that are: ability, military force and assigned mission [7].

Ability is a clear indicator that some type of measurement must be implemented in order to determine the degree to which military forces can, or cannot, meet the demands of assigned missions.

Military forces is an element that usually refers to military unit or units, a structure that must be clearly identified, because that will ultimately indicate the composition of that force in terms of manpower (service members) and fire power (individual weapons, weapons systems etc.).

Assigned missions are that large variety of tactical and operational tasks that a unit may be tasked to accomplish by its higher authority at the national or international level with its specific limitations in order to support a state national interests.

the assigned missions. The inputs that will form the future ready units are dictated by all existing strategic documents and require all military personnel involved in the planning process to properly evaluate the requirements in order to focus on

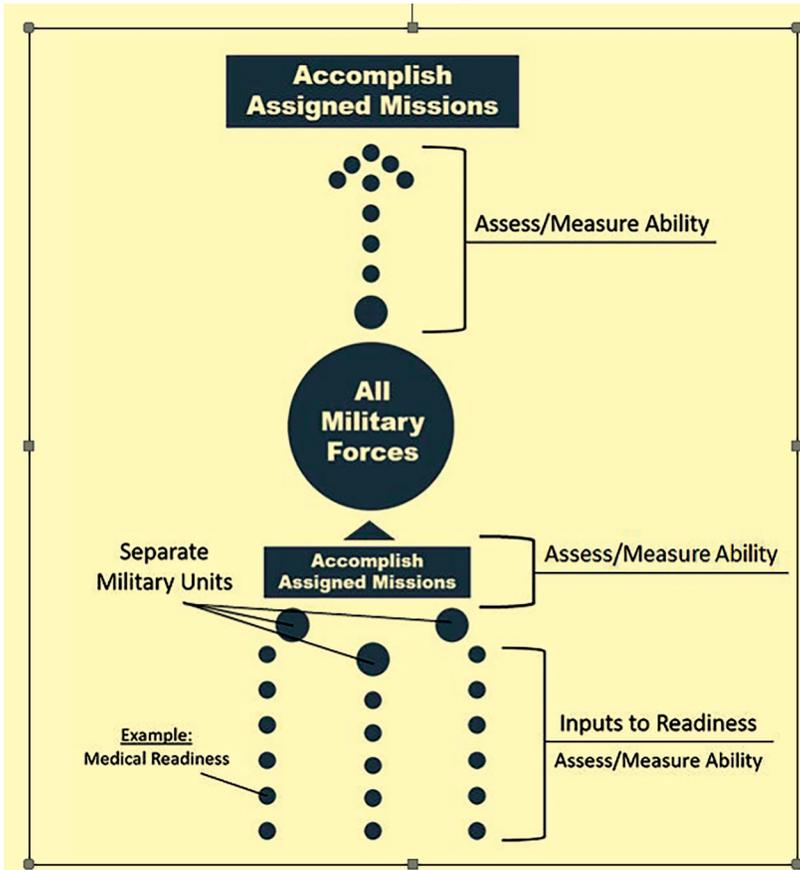


Fig.1 Basic Readiness Framework [8]

Fig.1 provides an easier understanding of what a readiness of the military force consists of, demonstrates a critical need of a self-evaluating models at all levels and the path a unit must undergo in order to become force ready to execute

the correct capabilities that the force must develop, maintain and be ready to perform.

With this particular paper, the author aims to provide relevant information with different points of approach towards the “readiness

evaluation” of the force for the main decision makers from the Main Staff of the National Army of the Republic of Moldova. The paper also strives to provide a relatively accurate assessment on existing differences between the requirements stipulated in the National Strategic Documents the Government commitment towards supporting those requirements and the necessity of developing a lucrative and efficient methodology, which fits the best Moldovan Armed forces, to evaluate the readiness status of the Army units. It could be a capability based approach that would match the national objectives or any other model decided. Therefore, the requirement to provide Moldovan decision makers with a solution that is suitable, feasible, and acceptable, to address the discrepancies in current methodology of evaluating readiness status of the force, is vital. Current points of concern for the Chief of the Main Staff include inappropriate budgeting that results in limited available resources, outdated military doctrine that is not aligned with the National Strategic Documents, outdated and improper military structure that do not foresees special entities that could provide necessary inputs for the main decision makers, and improper use of information, practices, and systems adopted by the National Army of the Republic of

Moldova with respect to its internal structure, level of development and the Government will to actually modernize its Armed forces.

Having stated the purpose, the author is aware of the limited time at his disposal therefore the content of this paper will be based mostly on theoretical findings and his personnel experience and knowledge of the system in which he serves almost for 20 years. To accomplish stated objective, the author will apply a “qualitative research” method through the entire work. The work will primarily focus on meaning, understanding the definitions, limited data collection, and finally inductive and comparative data analysis and results. Predominantly, a qualitative research is rich in description, shows depth of understanding, and is presented as themes or categories. It does not focus on asking “what” event occurred; instead, it focuses on understanding “why” the specific event occurred [9].

2. THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

“That is not to say that we can relax our readiness to defend ourselves. Our armament must be adequate to the needs, but our faith is not primarily in these machines of defense but in ourselves.”

Chester W. Nimitz

2.1. Evaluating national strategic framework

Before getting to discuss the readiness itself or evaluation of the force/units of a nation, it is required to understand the requirements of developing a specific capability and sustain it to a certain standard being it a national or any other standard which the nation has adopted in order to train, maintain and prepare its forces for the missions stated in its strategic documents. In order to better understand the situation around the Armed Forces of Republic of Moldova and particularly about its National Army, a short analysis of the existing strategic framework which forms the bases for the development of the country is presented below.

The very first strategic document worth mentioning is the National Security Concept (NSC) of the Republic of Moldova, adopted on 29 June 1995 and modified on 22 May 2008, represents the national security priorities of the country. It provides basic national security guidelines, indicates security vulnerabilities and threats, and stipulates the military will be used only for defensive purposes. In the NSC the Armed Forces of RM are viewed only as a means to repel any type of external aggression. At the same time, the NSC is seriously focused on the

diplomatic means of national power through the European integration and international cooperation to provide national security, without a specific role the Armed Forces of Republic of Moldova have to assume in order to support all national interests [10]. Finally, the NSC does not provide any directives towards the selection of the means necessary to preserve the national security.

Second strategic document is the National Security Strategy (NSS) was approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on 15 July 2011. It identifies the national security objectives (ends) and the ways and means needed to achieve them [11] providing very bleared and general definitions in term of expectations as final objectives. In analyzing the current environment and focusing on the possible threats, the strategy does not foresee any substantial threats of foreign aggression towards the RM the main focus being oriented towards the Transnistrian Region “issue”. It also considers that existing instabilities across the whole of Europe might directly affect the security of all European countries. Nevertheless, its main objectives are to maintain the national security, security sector reform, and to address the acute necessity of the National Army’s modernization, without pointing

towards desired force structure or capabilities that National Army has to develop. As with the NSC, the NSS does not stipulate any means for executing this reform, does not set any time frames, either through modernization steps or through allocation of funds to conduct the security sector reform.

As current political situation, or may governing authorities, the strategy of 2011, relies heavily on the international community assistance. Main aspiration being oriented towards continuous cooperation, participation, and support in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations. The international actors such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are mentioned numerous times throughout the entire document, however the level and limits that would delimitate that cooperation and desired effects are not stipulated, main focus being oriented towards continuing the cooperation in order to contribute to maintain peace and security at the regional and global levels [12]. Finally, the NSS provides the base line and guidance for the National Defense Strategy (NDS.)

The NDS is a policy document that provides the basis for national

defense planning for all of the state institutions that are involved in providing and supporting the national defense. The last NDS was ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on 19 July 2018, a document developed by the Ministry of Defense with the support from all other ministries involved in assuring the state's defense. In accordance with the Point Number 6 of the NDS, among the following national interests, is clearly stated the European Integration vector and contribution to the international security:

1. Assuring state's sovereignty, independence, and unity;
2. Assuring stable and sustainable development of the state;
3. European Integration;
4. Territorial reintegration;
5. Wellbeing and prosperity of the citizens;
6. Participating in providing international security [13].

The NDS provides an accurate analysis of the security environment, which is continuously changing and contains more complex threats, starting in Europe, touching our neighbors Ukraine and finishing in the Middle East. It is important to mention that all of those changes require a significant governmental commitment in order to consolidate all means and provide necessary

support to conduct a meaningful reform and modernization of the entities involved in providing national security, in particularly the National Army of the RM as a main force provider in the country.

Considering the threats and risk-creating factors to the national security such as: the substantial military potential in the Transnistrian Region; the Russian Federation military presence in the Transnistrian Region; instruments of informational propaganda; attacks on critical infrastructure of the Republic of Moldova; cyber-attacks, instability, and conflict in Ukraine; economical provocation, and emergency situations caused by natural disasters, the NDS established the following objectives:

1. Strengthen, develop, and upgrade the capacity of the national defense system to provide adequate response to threats and risks that intend to undermine the national security and defense;

2. Adapt the legal framework to ensure the efficient functioning of the national defense system through an inter-institutional approach and in accordance with the integrated defense planning;

Developing the capabilities needed to meet the commitments made with reference to the international security and stability, as well as on peace consolidation [14].

Even though the objectives are more politically oriented, in the first objective is mentioned the necessity to “strengthen, develop, and upgrade the capacity of the national defense system to provide adequate response to threats and risks”.

The NDS also provides the directions, at the national level, that must be undertaken in order to obtain the above mentioned objectives, through: (1) development of military capabilities; (2) development of an efficient mobilization mechanism; (3)parliamentary control;(4)adequate legal framework; (5) strategic communication; (6) consolidation of the national defense capabilities towards an eventual hybrid threat; (7)improvement of the crisis response capabilities; (8) providing security to the existing critical infrastructure; (9) effective border control; (10) standard implementation for the cyber defense capabilities; (11) RM credibility consolidation towards its external partners; (12) military education improvement; and, (13) development of a cooperative relationship with intergovernmental or regional organizations [15], however, the capabilities that have to be strengthened or developed are not listed or specified.

Following the NDS is the Military Strategy (MS) of the RM as the most recent and actual

strategic document, being adopted by the Government of the RM on 03 October 2018 that indicates the direction that Moldovan Armed Forces must undertake in order to achieve its objectives. Besides the accurate description of the threats and risks that Armed Forces could face in order to execute its constitutional predestinations of guaranteeing the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the country along with maintaining its constitutional democracy, the MS indicates the set of missions that Armed Forces must be able to perform:

1) Ensuring national defense by preventing, deterring and repelling threats and military aggressions against the RM;

2) Ensuring participation in international missions/operations;

3) Supporting civilian authorities in emergency and crises-response situations [16].

Furthermore, the MS states in one of its objective, with a specific relation to its military component the necessity of creating the optimal response capacity (capability) of the Armed Forces to the military and hybrid challenges of the existing security environment [17] without mentioning the desired force structure or pointing on specific

capabilities that must be strengthened or developed, allowing in this way a lot of space of interpretation for the political opponents of the entire modernization process of the force as part of the Defense Sector Reform and risking its ability of justifying the financial requirements and receiving of much needed and planned funds. Even further, in its explanation of the subject and pointing at some specific tasks that Armed Forces must perform, the MS operates with some generic terms such as: development, consolidation, reorganization, assurance and extension [18], without mentioning any specific capabilities, special equipment or weapon and weapon systems towards which the focus should be oriented.

And continuing through that strategic document, when expected the least, at its end, the force structure component is mentioned. And even here, the requirements and preferences are very generic, pointing only at desired components (land, air and special operations component) and specification of the required structure: fighting units, supporting units, logistical units, and CBRN units [19], without indicating the desired size or level of required operating force. One exception being made with the special operations component, where the size is clearly stated, as one battalion size element.

The last but not least strategic document, worth mentioning is the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Moldova, adopted on 14 July 1996. The doctrine is mainly focused on the Republic of Moldova's Armed Forces ability to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state. Considering the fact that RM was barely starting its independent path, the factors of uncertainty and minimal experience in internal state affairs, the document is mainly focused on neutrality of the country and its defense capabilities, as main form of combat for which the Armed Forces should be trained and prepared. The doctrine also considers international military cooperation as the main political and military tool needed to be developed to overcome all existing regional threats [20]. It is important to reiterate the fact that the Military Doctrine has not been amended since 1995 and its provision do not match the current environment and ambitions of the Republic of Moldova.

2.2. The current situation

In the National Army of the RM the J7 Joint Training Direction and Doctrines Directorate, is the entity with a specific mission to ensure the general planning, organization, leadership, monitoring and evaluation

of the training process in the National Army and the institutions of the Ministry of Defense [21], arguably, one of the most important directorate of the General Staff of the Moldovan army. However, Considering the Directorate's limited capabilities and lack of qualified personnel during the last decade or so, the proper execution of its mission was almost impossible. As a result, units are trained using different programs that are not standardized across the Army. Different processes such as: Lessons Learned, CCREVAL Format, or Professional Evaluation of the entire personnel of the army, are processes that are copied from partnering countries that are implemented without considering the particularities of the National Army and without necessary time to accustom to the newly adopted processes. The current trend in the National Army is that all infantry brigades are trained in accordance with the existing programs, in use from the late 90s, and some independent units have their own training programs aligned towards NATO or UN cooperation. At the same time, the evaluation process of the readiness of all forces is established to be executed in accordance with the NATO Standardization Agreements (STANAGs). The author, as a former

battalion commander of the 22nd Peacekeeping Battalion, directed his staff multiple times to develop new programs aligned with the NATO STANAGs as a requirement to participate with his sub-units in the Operational Capability Concept, to which Moldova acceded in 2008. A STANAG is a NATO standardization document that specifies the agreement of member nations (or a partner nation) to implement a standard, in whole or in part, with or without reservation, in order to meet an interoperability requirement [22]. As a result, the 22nd Peacekeeping Battalion of the National Army of the RM is the only unit in the Moldovan Army that trains in accordance with the NATO STANAGs and national regulation and obtained for its sub-units certificates of NATO readiness.

Another important fact that needs to be mentioned is the education of the military personnel, especially of the officers that are occupying key decision positions that have been trained in many different countries such as: Romanian, USA, and other NATO countries. This often results in a different approaches to the planning process and its application by the Moldovan officers, because they are trained in different institutions, and finally, due to the lack of the common doctrinal base. As a result: army units

are trained differently with different objectives and standards, many field manuals and training materials are written without an adequate level of analysis and research, in some cases, those manuals are adopted without proper assessment and evaluation, and the common understanding of the existing situation do not exist through the entire force. Furthermore, all that creates confusion at the tactical and operational levels. To exemplify the above mentioned point, the author will point out one simple issues such as “planning process”: what is the planning process used throughout the Moldovan army? Is it the USA Army’s Military Decision Making Process or NATO’s Operational Planning Process? That is one of the many questions that needs to be answered before we, as an institution, could go any further.

Among all existing factors is worth mentioning that in Moldovan army, besides the J7 Directorate, no other entity exists in order to facilitate the implementation of any developed materials and also execute a proper control of the implementation process itself. A good example would be the existence in the USA Army of an organization such as Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC.), obviously adopted to the Moldovan army’s needs and established as a

smaller entity that will be able to focus on above mentioned tasks sparing some time and men power for the J7 personnel to better execute its missions, especially considering the limited manning of personnel of the J7 Directorate.

Considering the efforts that Moldovan army has made through the last decade towards the implementation of some aspects of the NATO doctrine, constantly being oriented towards increasing its interoperability with NATO members, there is still long way ahead in order to completely adjust the existing doctrine, fitting it to the current operational environment and national needs; provide adequate and standardized programs across the entire force; adapt or develop national evaluation criteria and standards that would much the national requirements, and conduct proper training in order to support implementations of the national objectives in conjunction with the implication of the desired capability for not only a pure military implication but also in support to the central and local authorities in case of the emergency situation. Creation of an organization such as TRADOC would increase the chances of having a completely useful doctrine that would respond to

the current operational environment, and indicate the ways and means to achieve that, of course having a proper evaluation component that would assure that public funds are wisely spent.

2.3. Summary

This chapter was focused on acquiring necessary information in order to better understand the existing strategic framework existing in the Republic of Moldova and the real situation that unofficially reflects the cruel reality that the Moldovan army is facing, from one side requesting to be treated as an equal and credible partner, having at the same time internal difficulties at Army level that create difficulties promoting a single doctrine and a single concept well trained and executed through the entire force. Different countries at different times can serve as examples of more or less successful transformation of their armies, therefore considering limited economical ability of the Republic of Moldova and its continuous political instability, the author tends to consider that Moldovan Army is still in a transformation process that in order to be completed or finalized, more time, implication and resources are needed.

Decision makers at the Moldovan army's General Staff will have to complete that difficult and costly modernization process, started in 2018, by starting clearly stating the required capabilities and prioritizing them properly, maintaining a balanced approach, in order to obtain the Governmental support, despite the governing political parties, and start implementing those provisions step by step. In doing so, the decision makers have to prioritize the threats, establish a clear position towards the existing Transnistrian Region "frozen" conflict, and consider the importance of the force's ability to have a proper protection, maintain its mobility, and be able to provide sufficient firepower to defend national boundaries in case of an armed conflict. A fact that some of the above mentioned changes will require significant financial investment, have to always be considered, however, to accomplish others, a great financial support is not needed, in any of those cases an imperial ingredient that currently is missing is the Republic of Moldova's Government commitment towards supporting and accomplishing the desired changes.

Considering that RM's strategic documents different years of implementation and their relative

correspondence to the current operational environment, they still all provide a solid foundation for the employment of the National Army in order to defend its territorial integrity and support country's sovereignty. However, more clear priorities in terms of military objectives, capabilities, and force structure are still required. There is room for improvement, especially in: determining the basic combat units of the Moldovan Army; specifying required elements (size of the military unit or battle group); determining the units ability of performing the security requirements (are those units capable of: operating independently, conducting combined arms operations, defending the territorial sovereignty, or assisting civilian administrations in case of natural emergency situations?). Those are the main questions that military decision makers need to answer in a short term in order to create a proper basic understanding through the entire force, providing e reference point of where we, as an Army, want to be in the projected future. And when those questions are properly answered, a proper implementation of the modernization process is imperial, otherwise everything will end up being a "good plan" on paper, never executed or implemented.

3. DEFINING CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO READINESS MEASUREMENT

Considering the constantly changing operational environment, trending technological progress, and other numerous systematic approaches towards the measurement of the force readiness, in one of its aspects or another, the author considers the most appropriate approach the analysis of the two main categories: one that are oriented towards forces and other oriented towards units.

3.1. Approach oriented towards units

As it could be understood from the headline, the first category addressed by the author, will be the one oriented towards units. In this category, three main methods oriented towards determining the readiness of a unit should be considered, such as:

- *Asset reporting* – one self-explanatory method, basically oriented towards a proper assessment of the resources held by a single unit;
- *Unit modeling* – a system (simulation) that basically translates the information on existing resources into an estimate an affordable weapon systems or mission generation rates;

- *Functional testing* – units evaluation for determining the operational level or deployment status, through multiple exercises and testing systems [23].

First method addressed by the author, will be the *asset reporting method* that is used through all units, focusing not only on operational equipment but also on any other logistical resources. This method allows the units to maintain a continue accountability of all the resources available, facilitates the tracking of any assets in case of distribution, and identifies the assets availability in the entire Army for the J4 Logistical Directorate, in case of an emergency.

In the National Army of the RM, this method is translated into an inventory process and is conducted on a regular bases (twice a year is a mandatory process) and can be conducted in case of an unexpected situation. Those inventory processes are conducted under a strict supervision of the Army's J4 Logistical directorate, that have a main objective a proper accountability of all the resources and evaluation of all resources that are strictly related to the maintenance of the operational level of the units.

It is worth mentioning, that for any of the readiness evaluation methods or procedures, the inevitable

portion of discussion is sustainability, which itself is a very complex and diverse process, that will not be addressed by the author due to the limitation existing and not being able to address all particularities, but could easily consider an interesting topic for a future project.

Second method addressed by the author, will be the *unit modeling method* that is transforming unit inputs into estimates of unit “outputs” [24]. Considering the author background, the references and examples are to be made by referencing infantry units. In this particular case, the base structure will be taken as an infantry battalion, a structure that can be easier understood and digested. So considering that particular method, the “outputs” will not come in number of enemy targets destroyed or enemy troops destroyed in the defense positions or anything else related to the enemy troops. Instead, the method will provide the decision makers with “outputs” such as: number of companies or platoons available, number of special operating teams available to be engaged or dispatched in order to accomplish unit’s missions.

This particular method is intensively used especially in the process of mobilization of troops in case of an emergency. The National

Army of the RM in its internal plans have provisions and implications for this particular method, however due to its classified implementations, the subject will not be discussed in large details. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that this particular method is mostly used in situations when a particular force structure must be generated or created, in case of mobilization, and that requires a significant logistical implication that ultimately will dictate the state of readiness of such a force.

Last but not least method from the so called units approached category, is the *functional testing method* that is general contrast with assets reported and units’ actual outputs [25]. That particular method should reflect the ability or capacity of the unit to execute its main and specific tasks and missions. It is important to mention here, that this is the first method that brings to the table also the results of unit’s individual and collective training as well as the level of skill and experience presented by its key members. All of this results are ultimately reported to the higher echelons that keep track of the availability of the operational units.

In the National Army of the RM, all that is organized by different programs that are oriented not only

on a unit as an single entity but also on a different components of the unit, such as: headquarters, smaller units, support elements, logistical elements etc. The problem though comes into play in this particular method and is related to the discrepancies existing in the training programs and evaluating programs. An example could be for instance the Training Program for the infantry platoons that is dated by 2011 and is oriented towards obtaining a specific set of skills by the soldiers that are not matched in the modern warfare. At the same time, the evaluating programs are NATO oriented, the last set of programs is dated by 2019 and the requirement for evaluation do not match the training objectives and as a result a friction situation is created between the personnel of the evaluated unit and the evaluating group. Manpower strength of the unit and level on which its personnel is equipped also affects the unit ability to perform some of its tasks and missions, that is another problem in RM, expressed in continuous personnel fluctuation and low level of resource provided to the units.

In addition, even though the National Army of the RM has a Training Center, the pre-deployment evaluation of the units participating in the International Peace Keeping

Operation in Kosovo (KFOR) is conducted outside the country, in Germany (twice per year) where Moldovan sub-units are part of the Mission Readiness Exercises and are evaluated by the foreign military personnel and the Army dose not benefit of any feed-back coming from such as exercises being limited to some post-action report filled by the national senior representor that is not necessary a representor of the unit that delegates the troops for the operation. As a result, lack of the inputs and effective lesson-learned process slows the development of the proficiency level of the troops and forces the Army to relay on continuous external assistance in affairs that can be solved internally.

In any of the cases, it is obvious that functional testing tends to focus more on unit training, attempting to understand what people can accomplish with the available resources [26]. That is because the operational performance is directly linked to manpower strength and the level on which the unit is equipped. However, if enough data could be collected and a proper analysis conducted it could have been possible to project a real time needed for the unit to accomplish a specific set of tasks versus focusing on exactly defined time frame in which

the unit must be able to execute its main and specific tasks and missions. Nevertheless, only testing is the most suitable verification, be it theoretical or practical, that can provide unbiased results on the individual's professional level and unit's ability to perform as a single entity under different situation and scenarios.

3.2. Approach oriented towards forces

Even though states with smaller forces do not prefer that approach, some of the major power (USA in particular) are considering the force oriented approach as one of the methods to collect data on resources and units in order to have a clear picture of what is available in case of necessity. It might seem that the below described methods will be more appropriate to describe the sustainment status of the force, author considers necessary mentioning them. The main methods of the force oriented approach discussed are:

- *Stockpile reporting* – manpower reporting and material inventories held to summarize the estimates of how long those can be operational in wartime;

- *Mobilization planning* – represents a set of plans and concepts oriented towards concentrating

the needed number of personnel, equipment and materials or on orienting industrial resources on production of military needs;

- *Deployment planning* – represents a set of plans for moving personnel and materials in different contingency situations;

- *Combat modeling* – represents a war gaming technique, force-on-force, structures, strategies, doctrines and tactics of the enemy forces [27].

The *stockpile reporting method*, is more oriented towards sustainment as it characterizes the sustainability in peace and war time. However it is viewed through the readiness lenses due to the fact that the lack of plans for providing necessary information in peacetime and war can generate serious problems in terms of providing adequate manning and distribution of the existing and required sources. As a result, a simple example can be provided in this case, for instance in the National Army of the RM the standard for the personal supply (class I) for each soldier should be for 24 hours. The operational unit are provided with 3 DOS-es of class I, etc. All those provisions are critical for providing proper functionality of the Army or for its particular units. Each country in its Armed Forces has

its own system of calculating the DOS for each class of supply, depending on the density of the implication and its economical capacity, therefore judging one system or another is improper for such an situation, it is important that such plans exist and are continuously tested.

As mentioned above, this particular method is suited more to evaluate the level of sustainment, but because those two areas are so interdependent, it's impossible not to mention that particular method in evaluating the readiness of the unit. Not being supplied properly, in accordance with the country's national regulation, that force cannot be counted as operational, the troops will be concerned on finding food and water but not on execution of the received mission.

Second method of the force oriented category is the *mobilization planning method* that is the act of assembling and organizing national resources to support national objectives in time of war or other emergency [28]. Speaking about mobilization system of a state requires certain classification level, nevertheless some theoretical issues can be addressed, and to make it more clear the author will divide the subject in mobilization of the force

and industrial mobilization of the state. If the concept of the *Force Mobilization* is self-explanatory and means the Armed forces of the state, or a part of them, are brought to a certain level of alert under which those forces must execute some specific missions in accordance with the national plans. The *Industrial Mobilization of the State* requires a larger implication at a national level, depending on the country, of the Government, Parliament or the President of the country in order to provide the needed materiel and services for the Armed forces.

Furthermore, analyzing the *Force Mobilization* concept, American doctrine provides us with a "total force concept" [29], which basically means that besides the active military components there is also a reserve component that must be incorporated. In case of the RM the total force concept exists and is implemented by the Ministry of Defense through the Army's recruiting centers and all central authorities at local levels. It is worth mentioning that due to the fact that military service in National Army is a mandatory service for all yang men between ages of 18 and 27, at the certain extend that facilitates the readiness level of the reserve, but after

a few years, without proper training the men are forgetting the required skills and the reserve transforms into an extremely costly enterprise that requires a large amount of resources to bring them to a basic skill level. If in some countries the reserve contingent training is conducted on a year-to-year bases in RM this is something note so common. The exercises are planned, but due to the lack of commitment by the RM's Government and not receiving all necessary funds, the National Army itself cannot organize such trainings and events.

The *Industrial Mobilization* is the process that RM cannot afford due to the fact that the country basically dos not produce anything, as a result is relying heavily on the external assistance in case of a contingency. Nevertheless, the existing *Mobilization Plans* are properly reflecting the current situation and as a result other domains of the development of the country alongside the private sector representatives are supporting the Armed forces in a clearly defined way with specific responsibilities being outlined and verified annually, in terms of commitment of a specific equipment or materiel or its substitution.

Next method addressed is the *deployment planning method* that represents a set of activities ranging from the assessing the feasibility of moving forces and their equipment, along with the supply packages, from one point (peaceful area) to another (war zone ore theatre of operations), considering readiness packages and ending with detailed schedules for their movement [30]. It is important to mention here that deployment itself does not address a single iteration, planners must consider the rotation of the units, redeployment operations, sustainment operations for maintaining the troop's readiness while deployed and any other contingencies. And of course national law must permit the actual deployment of the specific unit. In case of the RM the Parliamentary Decree is required if the National Army planes to provide forces to contribute to the international peace and security anywhere around the world. For participation of the Moldovan contingent in KFOR all required legal aspects are addressed, and as a result Moldovan soldiers are part of that particular mission since 2014.

Final method of the force oriented category worth mentioning is the *combat modeling method* that is a method usually used in situation

to consider effects of all alternative strategy and force structure in relation to known hypothetical enemy strategy and its force structure [31]. It could be in reality anything from the documented map-oriented sketch to a software that should consider: territorial changes (over time), cumulative casualties (for each side), and the remaining force (for each side at different timing), all that required to have a more proper projection of the own force against enemy's strategy and estimated force structure. To be able to execute a combat modeling huge financial sources are required, as a result smaller states are not ready yet to allocate resources for development and implementation of that method due to the fact that their focus is currently oriented towards modernization of the Armed forces and reforming the entire defense sector in some cases.

However, it is worth mentioning that this particular method offers important advantages in developing own strategies by establishing own requirements and estimating outcomes, or even predicting the result of an armed conflict. Such a method provides also information with respect to a specific location, operational scale and magnitude and of course establish own forces readiness level and sustainability

volume. Even if the process requires a lot of data, assumptions, activities, and analysis the results are what matters, and those results could easily become the game changer in a course of an armed conflict.

Considering the efficiency of some of those methods it is important to mention them all, and when it comes to their implementation, each country should adopt its own system based on national needs and interests and develop its own methods in approaching the force readiness. All of the above methods are particularly suited for a specific situation, some more relevant to the peace time some to war time, but one thing should be cleared that all of them will require a proper logistical support, otherwise the readiness by itself could not be measured.

3.3. Quantitative and qualitative approach on determining combat readiness

As mentioned at the beginning of this work by the author, there are many different definitions for the combat readiness. As a result, currently, different states have different interpretations and connotations on measuring combat readiness. Furthermore, the instruments to evaluate and

measure the readiness of a unit are not standardized, and are generally agreed by each military organization separately. As a result in today's modern era, persist a lot of difficulties that resulted from different conceptualization approaches on measuring the combat readiness in different military forces, which create a huge impediment towards achieving interoperability.

In any Armed forces, exists a well-established reporting system that is used to monitor the combat readiness status of a military force. Usually, the Main Staff or the General Staff of the Army requires its units and sub-units, periodically, to submit their readiness status reports. These reports are compiled and analyzed to provide a clear picture of the standings of that particular unit or sub-unit. Most of the time, those reports contain information with all achievements of the unit. Therefore, those reports are critical in obtaining adequate and accurate information in understanding the level of the unit's combat readiness. The continuous monitoring of the readiness level allow the military force to monitor its status of combat readiness and its ability for deployment. At the same time, the units that are having difficulties in

obtaining their operational level and maintaining their readiness status are easier to identify and any apparent issues are in-time properly addressed. Nowadays, in order to measure the readiness status of a unit, most Armies are utilizing either quantitative (a numerical data for tangible elements) or qualitative (e verbal description of intangible elements) models. However, a model that would incorporate both of this approaches, that would depict the overall combat readiness status of the military force, do not exist.

The argument begins with the idea that measures of any of the military capabilities are unlikely to be the key for assessing combat readiness because existing and operable assets do not provide the information with the respect to the personnel readiness for combat that involves deployment desire and a will to fight [32].

To better understand that, an explanation on what are the quantitative or tangible variables is needed. Therefore, anything that can be numbered, or appreciated by a scale, tends to feet under the quantitative umbrella, such are:

- Number of personnel available;
- Communication assets;

- Mobility assets;
- Logistical capabilities;
- Number of weapons and weapons system available;
- Number of training activities, etc.

Some of the above mentioned variables can indicate the availability of resources, or can indicate that a particular dimension of a specific capability is ready in terms of the mathematical approach, by distributing the number of existing assets to the personnel available. However, all those variables are not presenting any clear indicators on the fact that the personnel is willing to engage in combat. Subsequently, in play are coming some of the key intangible variables such as *morale* and *intelligence*. As a prove point could be the historical case of inferior numerically Israeli Force that defeated a larger opponents during the Middle-East wars in the 1960s and 1970s, showing great knowledge of the military profession and a great spirit in defending its territorial integrity. Some other intangible variables that should be considered are:

- Quality of life (salary, housing, other social benefits);
- Health and personal safety;
- Family life;

- Relation with superiors, subordinates and colleagues;
- Neighborhood community;
- Work environment and career development [33].

Having discussed about both tangible and intangible elements, clearly that in any Armed forces, the tangible evaluation supported with the quantitative approach is more emphasized rather than intangible evaluation. Especially if the country is in the development process, by itself, focusing too much on its Armed forces with the respect to providing an adequate social services is very difficult.

3.4. A frame for an integrated assessment approach

As already discussed, the approach that a state can adopt depends on its national needs and interests, therefore Armed forces in implementing one or another approach are omitting some important variables that define the combat readiness of a unit. As a result, an integrated approach would probably solve all the existing problems. In order to lean towards the integrated approach, the decision makers must agree upon the fact that each of the approaches have their strengths and weaknesses.

For example: the units oriented approach is focusing more on conducting an inventory of the assets rather focusing more on training and obtaining operationalization of the units, the force oriented model is focusing more on number of units rather on some specific and critical capabilities that could determine the results of an engagement, the quantitative and qualitative approach is also focusing a lot on numerical statistics rather on providing clear guidance's on development and implementation of some policies that would support the intangible variables, etc. The examples are many and the point here is to have an agreement that using only one or another approach could not provide an accurate information on available number of ready units for national interests' implementation. The author supports the idea that some ways in linking those methods should be adopted by ach state separately. The reason for that is that in some countries the applied methodology works very well and provides result, regardless of its fractioned approach, to obtain that through the years, countries established a variety of functional entities that work do deliver the desired results and of course huge resources are allocated to support

such mechanisms. On the other side, there are countries that have limited capabilities in fully implementing one method or another, therefore, from the beginning those countries should develop their personalized integrated approach based on:

- National interests;
- National ambitions;
- National resources;
- National Military Doctrines.

Considering all of the above and the ability to provide estimates could project the medium and long terms objectives, predict a nation's role at the regional or global levels and could provide an adequate information for the decision makers in order to understand the size of the military force that needs to be brought to its operational level and maintains its readiness status as long as it is dictated by the national interests.

3.5. Summary

This chapter was focused on providing general information on the existing methodology in evaluating force readiness with a focus on one or another capability that could determine the readiness of a unit. It is important to understand that today do not exist a correct or wrong answer or a policy that would answer

all the questions related to readiness, and each state should adopt its own strategy in establishing the criteria by which they want to evaluate the readiness of its forces.

Decision makers at the Moldovan army's General Staff will have to adopt a system that will be suitable for National Army of the

RM taking into consideration all particularities such as: very general national interests that are not providing a clear understanding of the direction country is willing to follow, constantly changing operational environment in the region, continuous political instability, low level of the quality of life, the military level of

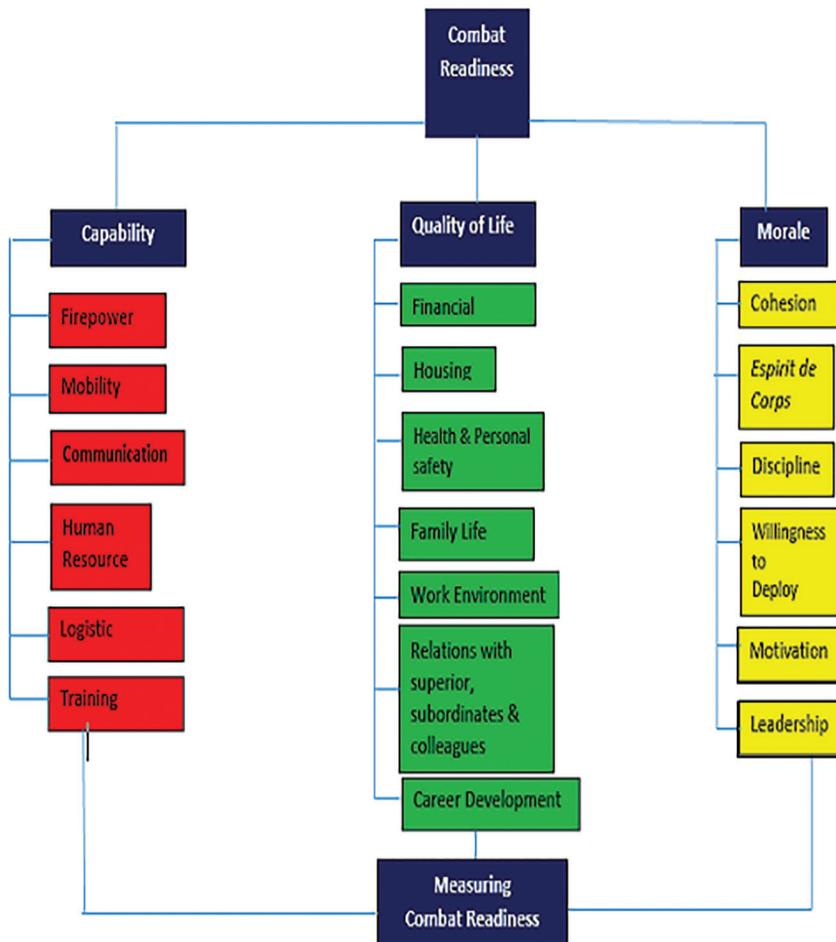


Fig.2 Approach on measuring the combat readiness [34]

ambition etc. in order to establish its own approach in determining the readiness status of its troops. In addition they must decide which capabilities need to be developed and what criteria should be implemented in order to have a feasible system that can deliver continuous results.

As a tool, the author provides, is an example of approaching the subject of evaluating force readiness (Fig. 2) that could serve as a starting point in order to obtain desired results for different nations.

4. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

“Readiness is an oft-mentioned – but frequently ignored – necessity.”
Erik Prince

4.1. Force readiness

In previous chapters, the author mentioned different definitions and approaches that can serve as a starting point towards establishing a functional system that can provide decision makers with accurate information and ready forces in order to accomplish its national interests. However, to be able to provide some recommendations to ameliorate currently existing situation in Moldovan army in this regard, a few points are still pending that worth mentioning.

First of all, to be able to apply any of the approaches mentioned in chapter 2, some tenets and criteria have to be established, that will facilitate the determination of the level of force readiness. In American army those tenets are: manning, equipping, sustaining, training, installations, and capacity and capability [35] that have each some criteria of measurement such as:

- For *manning* – ability to generate and man existing structures or health of the force;
- For *equipping* – equipment on-hand, equipment modernization, and critical materiel availability;
- For *sustaining* – maintenance, strategic mobility, munitions, and Army pre-positioned stocks;
- For *training* – operational training, institutional training, and training support;
- For *installations* – services, infrastructure, energy and water;
- For *capacity and capability* – capacity and capability and of course the risk assessment [36], something that must be used as a criterion for all the tenets.

In addition to the proposed tenets and criteria, that can be changed, based on the existing national need, it is important to maintain the overall strategic objectives. For them, could also be provided some indicators of relevancy. These specific indicators should be developed as generic topics that can impact the readiness of a different tenet. Therefore, to achieve effectiveness those indicators should remain constant over a specific period of time, providing in this way data for comparison and increasing the effectiveness of the produced analysis. And because it is a strategic level, these indicators should be utilized to inform the decision makers of what policy lever needs to be implemented to obtain the desired effect by utilizing the most optimal resource allocation.

Furthermore, speaking of readiness level and to ensure common language, it is essential to establish a common framework that will allow the military decision makers to obtain accurate and comprehensive reports on force's "readiness level". In order to be able to conduct assessment of the readiness across all tenets, properly, an example, which could also serve as a baseline, is the American model, which includes four levels of readiness assessment.

Readiness Assessment Level 1 – Issues and/or shortfalls have negligible impact on readiness and ability to execute assigned mission(s) in support of the NMS as directed in the global employment of the force (GEF) and Joint strategic capabilities plan (JSCP);

Readiness Assessment Level 2 – Issues and/or shortfalls have limited impact on readiness and ability to execute assigned mission(s) in support of the NMS as directed in the GEF and JSCP.

Readiness Assessment Level 3 – Issues and/or shortfalls have significant impact on readiness and ability to execute assigned mission(s) in support of the NMS as directed in the GEF and JSCP.

Readiness Assessment Level 4 – Issues and/or shortfalls preclude accomplishment of assigned mission(s) in support of the NMS as directed in the GEF and JSCP [37].

Before concluding this section, the author must mention one more interesting thing. For decades, multiple USA DoD military and civilian representatives, along with non-DoD organizations that deal with the defense community have used extensively the tasks of *organizing*, *training*, and *equipping* military forces, as synonymy for generating

force readiness [38]. The repeated description of readiness utilizing these three terms over time has led the decision makers from the defense sector to conclude that only by organizing, training and equipping the force, the readiness of the force will not be achieved. Obtaining the readiness requires a more complex approach that involves all decision makers at the state level through appropriate Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution process [39] focussed on the national level of ambition and will to obtain certain capabilities and standards.

As a result, today's planning process is not based only on these three contributors, main contributors, to the readiness level, it also encompasses subjects that determine the general readiness level, such as:

- Deteriorating facilities and infrastructure;
- Mismanagement of family housing;
- Construction of new buildings;
- Supplying (separate from equipping) of military forces;
- Supply chain vulnerabilities and challenges etc. [40], measures that require governmental support and constant sources allocation

that is critical to maintaining a ready force.

Having mentioned all of the above approaches, criteria and indicators, vital for development of a feasible regulation/instrument that can be utilized in order to provide both: military and civilian decision makers on one side and military units on the other side with clear definition, objectives, and guidance with clear time frames for obtaining the desired readiness level, the author can provide some guidance and recommendations for the key decision makers in order to facilitate the process.

4.2. Final recommendations for establishing functional system for readiness level assessment in Moldovan army

Prior of delivering the final recommendations, the author will perform an evaluation of the existing situation through the lenses of key military decision makers. While evaluating the real situation, clear tasks for the execution for the force must be established top-down from the Main Staff all the way to the last independent unit. Those tasks should be oriented towards having units ready to execute following duties: peacekeeping operation

in the Transnistrian Region, assistance operations to the national authorities in case of an emergency or natural disaster, and participation in multinational peacekeeping operations. Things that are currently missing in Moldovan army operational and tactical plans. The above mentioned tasks, are actually the three main directions proposed by the author that decision makers should orient their attention. On top of that, the military decision makers should provide realistic reports for the civilian authorities (Government, Parliament and the President of the Republic of Moldova) on what contributes the most to the readiness level, on existing organizational structures, level of training, and equipping that is currently on the military balance. Speaking of which, the main points of concern are:

- Constantly changing task organization, based not on a current analysis but on a personal desires of some decision makers;
- Lack of modern personal equipment, including vehicles and other types of equipment;
- Limited ability to honor the obligations assumed by RM to participate in multinational peacekeeping operations;
- Deficient budget allocations;
- Time for implementing the changes;
- Resistance of the entire enterprise for change; and,
- Lack of sufficient qualified personnel, at all levels, able to initiate and control all processes.
- In addition to the point discussed above, some other considerations must also be taken into count, such as:
 - Revision of all outdated strategic documents, and lobbying for the Government and Parliament to make clear amendments on the direction of the Armed Forces, the direction that must be supported by any governing political party;
 - Revision of the existing legislative system, that will approve the increase of the personnel figures of the units, based on security concerns and national objectives, and will also consider increase of salaries for the personnel, to make it more attractive for the younger generation;
 - Change, or upgrade of the military doctrine has to be executed in order to match

- the current requirements and allow unit commanders to focus on the adequate execution;
- Lack of a transparent plans of procuring special equipment for the Army units, including individual and collective equipment;
 - Inability to hold experienced personnel not only due to the very low salaries, but also due to the existing disputes with regard to the current scarce social benefits.

Not all of the above-mentioned points of concern, will be discussed separately by the author, however it is clear that all of them have a significant impact on the readiness level of any units or on entire force. Currently, the Moldovan army is on its transformation path, at a very early stage, and its main effort should be oriented on providing necessary equipment and sustainment, performing adequate training, and allow the Armed forces sub-units to execute properly their constitutional tasks on Republic of Moldova's territory or overseas. This is important for the Moldovan army to be able to focus on its near-term objectives, review its current state of affairs, and obtain flexible transition to the mid-

term objectives by gaining sufficient time for conducting adequate planning, revising, and adjusting of long-term plans and objectives.

Considering all of the above considerations and the author's general professional experience, his experience in multinational operations, and the Professional Military Education he received from CGSC, it is proper time to present the final recommendation.

First of all, the specialist from the National Army Main staff and Ministry of Defense must perform a comprehensive analysis of all existing strategic documents at the national level and trace a connection to the military strategic documents making sure that in all of these documents are reflected current realities, that include and are not limited to: the Transnistrian Region issues, the unstable environment that covers the neighboring countries (Ukraine and Romania) and Europe, and all around evaluation of the security sector. Upon completion, the Minister of Defense must be informed on the results that will be than presented to the Government of the Republic of Moldova. All concerns related to the national security must be presented in a way that all civilian stake holders can understand them. The role of

the Ministry of Defense is critical at this stage, it is important that all security issues are properly lobbied and governmental support is gained. When the government accepts the directions presented by the defense community, and truly commit for their implementation (on a long term, regardless political parties governing the state), a working group for Military Doctrine development should be created. The working group that can rely on external assistance must produce a comprehensive document that will reflect all points of concern mentioned earlier in this paragraph.

The second issue that must be addressed at the Army Main Staff and Ministry of Defense levels are the “blind implementation and support” of other military institutions standards and practices in order to obtain proper functioning of the military institution as an entire entity. Task-organization, functioning and developmental standards, along with evaluation criteria and standards should not be simply copied from partner nations. The plans must be analyzed and used as guide-lines for further development, adaptation, and provisional implementation, considering specific requirements related to Moldova’s society, culture,

and history in order to obtain desired capabilities. Therefore, bilateral and institutional agreements along with other assistance programs must be oriented towards the development of Moldovan army’s personnel through different educational programs that include both PME and specialized education.

The next issue that must be addressed, as an urgent one, is the readiness issue of military units. In order to prepare a force able to execute their constitutional tasks to defend the territorial integrity of the country and provide support to the civil authorities in case of natural disasters or emergency, the evaluation criteria should be established. These criteria could be related to: force protection, mobility of the force, fire power projection, agility and flexibility, etc., criteria that can be identified only after a comprehensive Military Doctrine will be developed. Following that a list of essential tasks for the military units must be developed and implemented along with the level of readiness suited for the specificity (social and economic) of the Republic of Moldova. Currently, the readiness status of a military unit is assessed by the higher echelon with an appreciation such as: “not ready”, “partially ready” or

“combat ready”, the reality that is not that accurate and has direct influence on the Moldovan army’s ability to influence the Transnistrian Region issue. Readiness status reflects the availability of resources and the number of qualified personnel. Therefore, addressing the issues mentioned above with increased attention to training and proper allocation of resources, readiness could be achieved and subsequently measured in order to match the desired outcome. Due to the fact that Republic of Moldova is not a part of NATO or the EU, and cannot completely rely on their military support in case of any foreign aggression, the National Army is the only entity responsible for the national defense, things that must be clearly understood by the national decision makers.

Finally, an absolute transformation of the Moldovan Army is vital and should be planned with short- and mid-term milestones, which will primarily focus on developing adequate task-organization, provide proper training, and equip the force. All that requires full governmental support in order to obtain a force capable to fully execute its constitutional tasks. The required capabilities can be developed and achieved, gradually,

only if the Government is committed to support the Defense Institution in becoming a more adaptive and flexible force.

Long-term planning is critical with the respect of renewing the existing vehicles fleet, major special equipment, and its weapons systems things that did not take place in last three decades of the existence of the Armed Forces. All that requires a significant budget increase for the Defense Institution as a whole. The much-needed transformation should not be limited only on the basic completion of existing units, but should also include the development of critical capabilities that will allow military units to execute their tasks. It is important to mention, that to be successful at all levels, the transformation should occur across all DOTMLPF-P domains at all three levels of warfare (strategic, operational and tactical.)

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion is worth mentioning, one more time, that achievement of national interest should be the priority of any governing entities of the state, regardless of their political colours and ambitions. Armed Forces, as one of the main pillars of the state, must not be forgotten by its government,

comprehensive and continuous approach is needed in order to develop, maintain, and sustain a ready force capable of executing its constitutional responsibilities. All of that being said, does not mean that the Defense Institutions should wait for an appropriate attitude from the government, they must continuously promote the tenets that are vital for the nation's existence, permanently lobby for the institution interests, that represent the national once, and insist on having a force, not that large in numbers, but agile enough, flexible, and capable to execute all given tasks.

In addition, the author had another chance to make a review of all strategic documents and army planning documents and military regulations related to the subject of force readiness evaluation, to identify the existing shortfalls and provide some recommendations.

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