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CREATION OF THE LESSONS LEARNED SYSTEM IN THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE AND ITS PERFORMANCE DURING THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR (January 2019-February 2022)

This paper deals with the historical aspects of creation of the Lessons Learned System in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in January 2019 and performance of this System during the Russo-Ukrainian war (2014–present) till 24 February 2022, when the Russian Federation launched a large-scale war against Ukraine.

The Lessons Learned System was built on the basis of previous System of lessons analysis and dissemination, which operated in the Armed Forces of Ukraine from December 1991 to December 2018. The advanced theoretical developments and practical achievements of organizational learning in the armed forces of NATO countries have been used to form the Lessons Learned System. This approach allowed exploiting the Alliance's lessons learned capabilities and improving interoperability of the Ukrainian Armed Forces with Forces of the NATO countries and their partners.

The need to study the history of organizational learning in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the Russo-Ukrainian war (Donbass war) from January 2019 till 24 February 2022 is primarily due to the importance of such research to ensure more effective functioning of the Lessons Learned System in enduring Russian armed aggression. The significance and relevance of this scientific-practical task is also determined by absence of the tailored studies in the Ukrainian historiography.

Today, the performance of this System is focused on providing efficient lessons learned capabilities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to implement learning and sharing of acquired knowledge and combat experiences, transforming such knowledge and experiences into appropriate remedial actions. A main objective of using the Lessons Learned System in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is to adapt the Ukrainian troops as soon as possible (faster than the enemy) to permanent changes in the Russo-Ukrainian war.

The article contains an analysis of the formation and performance of the Lessons Learned System in the Armed Forces of Ukraine correspondingly to the main System capabilities: 1) organizational structure; 2) formalized process of military learning; 3) lessons learned tools; 4) lessons learned training.

Keywords: experience, organizational learning, lessons learned process, Lessons Learned System, the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

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Introduction. Five years of the Russian armed aggression (2014-2018) and using of the obsolete and ineffective System of lessons analysis and dissemination (SLAD) has revealed an urgent need for cardinal improving the Ukrainian organizational learning potential (*Pashchuk Y., Pashkovskiy V., 2019: 36-43; Pashchuk, 2019: 21; MSR 2020*). Using of the SLAD in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) during the above-mentioned period has allowed to significantly improve the Ukrainian military capabilities. At the same time the Russo-Ukrainian war (Donbas war) has indicated an ineffectiveness of the SLAD and proved that this System had to be changed (*Pashchuk, 2019: 21; MSR 2020; Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022:141-159; Pashchuk, 2022: 298-300*). All main components of the System (organizational structure, formalized process of military learning, lessons learned tools, lessons learned training) have required fundamental modernization based on the contemporary theoretical developments and world best LL practices LL (*LL Handbook 2016*). It was clear that the SLAD had to be replaced by a fundamentally different modern system organizational learning.

Therefore, in August of 2018, the AFU leadership decided to focus an initiative on significantly improving of military learning by creating a fundamentally new prospective Lessons Learned System (LLS) (*LL 2018: 1-3*). This System is defined as a set of methods and techniques for using prescribed structure and tools to execute the lessons learned process (*Pashchuk, 2020: 21*).

The building of the above System meant the final transition from semi-formal lessons learned process (LLP) to permanent formal organizational learning (*Dyson, 2019; Dyson, 2020; Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022*). This effort was also driven by the priorities of the Ukrainian foreign policy towards gaining NATO membership and fully embracing interoperability.

The LLS Road Map was developed in November 2018 and included four dominant directions (*LL 2018; Pashchuk, 2019: 21; Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022:141-159*):

- 1) Forming a three-tier LL Organizational Structure, which includes lessons learned staff officers (LL SOs) and lessons learned points of contact (LL POCs) at tactical, operational, and strategic levels (by December 30, 2019)

- 2) Implementing NATO Lessons Learned Process into practice of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (by December 30, 2019)

3) Organizing effective lessons learned (LL) training for all military personnel, especially tailored courses designed specifically for the LL SOs (by December 30, 2019)

4) Creating the LL Portal (by June 30, 2021).

Problem statement. After beginning of the Donbass war in 2014 the process of reforming the AFU, especially in the domain of the LL project, has made significant progress in the continued capabilities development of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (*NRU 2020: 1-2; Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022:141-159*).

One of the key points of this advancement course was the NATO Representation to Ukraine (NRU) engagement with the AFU General Staff and initiating a Lessons Learned Capability Development Program in 2017 (*NRU, 2020: 1-2*). According to this Program the AFU Command and Control structure has been transformed conforming to the NATO standards, and the LL sections (LL bodies) have been set up in the AFU General Staff (Department J7), Military Services (Forces) Commands, Operational Commands and Joint Forces Operation (JFO) headquarters. The AFU Lessons Learned Process has been further institutionalized with the development and implementation of the LL Doctrine and LLP Temporary Standard Operating Procedures (*NRU, 2020: 1-2; LL 2020; SOP 2020*).

Despite these and other important successes, some key issues, and challenges in the LSS performance are still not have solved (*NRU, 2020; Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022:141-159*):

Lack of awareness and understanding of the standardized LLP at all levels of the AFU personnel.

The comprehensive LLP has not been fully implemented into AFU practice.

While deeply engaged with everyday important activities, commanders and HQ staff at all levels are not likely prioritize attention towards the LLP.

Sometimes the quality of LL analysis is poor due to insufficient time to prepare, lack of proper training with academic techniques in conducting LL analysis, as well as low level of timely and reliable information assurance.

Frequently after completing the analysis phase of LLP, the identified lessons are not implemented.

Sometimes LL sharing is ineffective, primarily due to collected experiences is not properly categorized and archived, as well as to

unreliable access to the existing LL Database with use of obsolete software and open information, to absence of the LL Portal with classified LL information.

The aforesaid limitations with development of the LLS are preventing the AFU ability to address all challenges and make use of potential best practices in the Ukrainian military. This situation is extremely unacceptable in the today's conditions of enduring large-scale Russian aggression, when a price of the AFU victory is too high: lives and security of the Ukrainian people; independence, and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The aim of the paper is to research the historical aspects of creation of the Lessons Learned System in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in January 2019 and performance of this System during the Russo-Ukrainian war (2014–present) till 24 February 2022, when the Russian Federation launched a large-scale war against Ukraine.

The main part of the article. According to the LLS Road Map (*LL 2018*), some tasks have been completed on time, several tasks have been performed with serious delays, and some very significant projects have not been accomplished yet (*NRU, 2020; Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022: 158-159*).

First, the new LL organizational structure, including setting up of the modernized LL bodies in the JFO area, has been carried out in a timely manner, by early 2020. However, in most cases the appointed LL officers have not received proper LL training and have not obtained appropriate experience in organizing the Lessons Learned Process.

Besides, the principal LL doctrinal documents have been developed with delays or have not been processed yet. In particular, due to cardinal changes in the AFU leadership when Zelensky became the sixth president of Ukraine, the LL Doctrine (*LL 2020*) and the LLP Temporary Standard Operating Procedures (*SOP 2020*) were introduced in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in July 2020, later than scheduled in December 2019 (*LL 2018: 3*). The documents, that should describe methods and approaches in performing certain LL procedures (e.g., gathering and drafting observations, analyzing information on problems and positive experiences, validating the results of such analysis, sharing and tracking LL information) are not developed yet. Moreover, there are no detailed techniques in the AFU organizational learning for analyzing combat operations, military exercises, peace support operations etc.

The permanent AFU LL training courses in teaching LL SOs and LL POCs were planned to launch in December 2019. But the first pilot national LL course was completed at the National Army Academy (Lviv) only on 14-18 June 2021 (*NRU, 2020; Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022: 158-159*). The main problem was in lack of adequate training of AFU LL courses staff and their poor experience in organizing and teaching the Lessons Learned Process. The NATO Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre's Advisory and Mobile Training Teams planned to provide the specialized LL courses for the AFU LL personnel, including LL courses staff, in 2019 and 2020, but finally could conduct the programmed course in May 2021 (*Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022: 158-159*).

“The foundations of Mindset and Leadership are the fundamental social and cultural climate the organization needs for an effective LL capability” (*LL Handbook 2016:23*). Any organizational learning plan or procedure, or process, no matter how perfectly designed, could be rendered ineffective if there is a lack stakeholder investment. All soldiers within each level command structure should understand the importance of the LLP and take an active role in this process, in identifying issues, finding their root causes and proposing remedial actions. All commanders, especially at the most senior level, should play a key role in forming and engaging the Lessons Learned System. They should emphasize focus on effective decision-making through the LLP and encourage subordinates to freely share observations and study the previous lessons learned.

To achieve efficient military learning in AFU there is still one of the most serious unsolved problems that consists in lack of awareness and understanding of LLP at all levels of the Ukrainian military personnel. The Armed Forces of Ukraine still do not pay attention to informing soldiers and officers on organizational learning issues on a regular basis, and the professional military education does not provide adequate basic knowledge in LLP for Ukrainian cadets (*Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022: 141-167*).

According to the results of survey in examining the effectiveness of the military learning, that was conducted in 2020 (*Pashchuk, 2020*), it was concluded that the AFU personnel was not aware sufficiently on the LLS performance. Only 18.9% of respondents knew about creation of the LLS as well as about its main components and the LL procedures (*Pashchuk, 2020: 62; Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022: 158-167*).

One of the solutions to this problem should be the mandatory inclusion of the course “Organizational learning” into the educational training programs for AFU officers (*Pashchuk, Pashkovskiy, 2019*). The purpose of this course is to teach cadets the capabilities of the LLS, prepare future officers to apply the acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities in practical military learning.

Since the military learning efficiency heavily depends on use of modern information technologies, the LLS performance cannot be successful without launching the LL Portal. There is a significant delay in implementing the LL Road Map (*LL 2018*) to create the AFU LL Portal. The Portal should combine the existing multiple scattered LL databases and grant authorized LL data access for the AFU personnel as well as support the specialized forums that cover a wide variety of organizational learning areas.

The LL Doctrine (*LL 2020: 19-21*) revised the Road Map principles and terms in creation of the LL Portal and presented three new stages of formation and development of the Portal infrastructure.

The first stage was building the LL databases in different commands, in particularly, creating the central databases in the Joint Forces Command and Center for Operational Standards and Troops Training. Sharing of LL information was planned to perform both in printed and electronic forms by open system “Dnipro” and Secured Electronic Documents Management System (SEDO-M).

The second stage should involve developing of the LL Portal software and combining the resources of the LL databases within Internet (for open information) and secure networks with access to authorized users.

During the third stage the databases of the AFU LL Portal and the NATO LL Portal should be integrated for sharing the open LL information. The exchanging of classified LL information between Ukraine and NATO was planned in accordance with the adopted international agreements on data protection.

The above approach is quite problematic and time consuming to implement. As databases, which were originally developed in different AFU military bodies and institutions, have different structure and standards for data exchange, which will lead to serious difficulties in combining information resources of such databases, their control, management and use as well as in integrating with the NATO LL databases.

The building of the AFU LL Portal is based on the experiences and best practices of the NATO countries, as well as on the methodological and technical assistance offered by these states (*NRU 2020*). Thus, a comparative analysis of organizational learning performance in some NATO member countries and Alliance shows the existence of several unsolved issues and contradictions (*Francisco Garcia de Paredes, 2020: 1*). For example, “a lack of a common standards for data exchange, different interpretations of LL terms and procedures” cannot enable the successful integration and interoperability of LL databases in the NATO member states (*Francisco Garcia de Paredes, 2020: 3-4*).

Considering this lesson, as well as the priority of Ukraine's course towards full membership in NATO, it is important to adjust the existing regulatory framework for organizational learning (*LL 2020, SOP 2020*) and implement the theoretical and methodological principles of the NATO military learning. Therefore, the LL Doctrine (*LL 2020*) and LLP Temporary Standard Operating Procedures (*SOP 2020*) should be revised.

First of all, it concerns the application of the standardized NATO LLP in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (*LL Handbook 2016: 25-27*). To achieve interoperability with NATO countries in military learning, including the technical interoperability of LL databases, the above references need to be perfected. Foremost, it is necessary to edit the LL terms and definitions in accordance with fundamental NATO LL documents (*Francisco Garcia de Paredes, 2020: 3-4*).

Since there are some contradictions between the LL Doctrine (*LL 2020*) and Temporary Standard Operating Procedures for LLP (*SOP 2020*) in presenting certain LL procedures, the LLP should be systematically described in a more accessible form. Especially it pertains to outlining the responsibilities of originating and tasking authorities, action bodies as well as the responsibilities of LL personnel, in particularly, duties of LL SOs and LL POCs.

In addition, there is a need to simplify and adjust a number of LL reporting documents (*Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022*). For example, for gathering and drafting observations, analyzing information on problems and positive experience, it is proposed to use the NATO ODCR layout (*LL Handbook 2016: 33, 67-71*).

Conclusions. Thus, a significant factor in Ukraine's Victory in enduring Russo-Ukrainian war is ensuring high efficiency of the Lessons Learned System. Compared to peacetime, this System is

focused on processing, sharing, and transforming significantly larger volumes of data on the acquired knowledge and combat experiences in difficult, complicated wartime conditions. Therefore, today it is extremely important to analyze the LSS achievements obtained before 24 February 2022, upgrade accordingly this System and conduct its performance to improve efficiency of the AFU training and employment. An aim is to reduce risks of repeating mistakes and increase chances for Ukrainian tactical, operational, and strategic victories.

Based on results of the analysis of the LSS creation and this System performance in the Russo-Ukrainian war from January 2019 till 24 February 2022, a special emphasis is placed on advance modernization of the Lessons Learned System. It should be noted that forming of the LLS System is carried out slowly behind the schedule set by the Road Map and other guidelines. There is an acute need in improving the quality of analysis and summarization of huge volume data of obtained observations, faster sharing of the necessary information to those who need it most, providing distributed and secured access the AFU personnel to identified and learned lessons, best practices. The effectiveness of the LSS strongly depends on raising awareness, motivation, and concernment of the AFU personnel in organizational learning, extending the leading role of commanders in military learning, improving the LL training as well as upgrading the LL tools.

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СТВОРЕННЯ СИСТЕМИ ВИВЧЕННЯ І ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ДОСВІДУ У ЗБРОЙНИХ СИЛАХ УКРАЇНИ ТА ЇЇ ФУНКЦІОНУВАННЯ ПІД ЧАС РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ (січень 2019 – лютий 2022)

У статті досліджено створення у Збройних Силах України Системи вивчення та впровадження досвіду у січні 2019 року, історичні аспекти функціонування даної Системи під час російсько-української війни (2014 – по теперішній час) до 24 лютого 2022 року, коли Росія розпочала повномасштабну агресивну війну проти нашої держави та її народу.

Формування вказаної Системи здійснювалося на основі попередньої Системи узагальнення та поширення досвіду, що діяла у Збройних Силах України з грудня 1991 року по грудень 2018 року. При створенні Системи вивчення та впровадження досвіду були використані передові теоретичні і практичні засади організаційного вивчення та впровадження досвіду, що розроблені і застосовуються у збройних силах країн - членів НАТО.

Потреба у дослідженні історії організаційного вивчення та впровадження у Збройних Силах України під час російсько-української війни з січня 2019 року по 24 лютого 2022 року зумовлена насамперед важливістю такого дослідження для забезпечення більш ефективного функціонування Системи вивчення та впровадження досвіду в надзвичайно складних умовах триваючої російської збройної

агресії. Також необхідність вказаного науково-практичного завдання визначається тим, що в українській історіографії відсутні дослідження, присвячені вищезазначеному питанню.

На сьогодні діяльність Системи вивчення та впровадження досвіду спрямована на формування здатності Збройних Сил України реалізувати продуктивне організаційне (колективне) вивчення та поширення отриманих знань і бойового досвіду, трансформування таких знань і досвіду у відповідні коригувальні дії. Основне призначення даної Системи – забезпечити якнайшвидше (швидше за противника) адаптування українських військ (сил) до постійних змін у війні.

Стаття містить аналіз формування і діяльності Системи вивчення та впровадження досвіду у Збройних Силах України відповідно до головних спроможностей цієї Системи: організаційна структура; формалізовані процедури; засоби; підготовка особового складу.

Ключові слова: досвід, організаційне вивчення та впровадження досвіду, процес вивчення та впровадження досвіду, Система вивчення та впровадження досвіду, Збройні Сили України.