

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS WITHIN THE UKRAINIAN ARMED FORCES

The article focuses on the organizational learning of experiences of the Ukrainian national contingents in the peace support operations and its impact on developing of the military learning within the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This paper deals with studying of two main periods in evolution of the military learning in the Ukrainian Armed Forces (December 1991 – December 2018 and January 2019 – February 2022).

The need to study the military-historical aspects of the organizational learning in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the peace support operations is primarily due to the importance of such research to ensure more effective functioning of the current Lessons Learned System in enduring the 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.

The above two periods considered in the article differ in using lessons learned processes and having divergent absorb and transformation abilities. Also, they are characterized by non-identical role and contribution of the Ukrainian military learning from the peace support operations in developing the organizational learning within the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Before the Russian armed aggression in 2014 the organizational learning in the peace support operations has played a leading role in the Ukrainian military learning. These activities have had a significant impact on developing of the lessons learned processes in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. After the start of the Anti-terrorist Operation in April 2014 the lesson learned process in the peace support operations has been not the highest priority. But the good practices in the organizational learning of the peace support operations were broadly used in redirecting the military learning to analyze and implement the combat experiences and develop organizational learning in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

With creating of the perspective Lessons Learned System in 2019 the Armed Forces of Ukraine developed the validated lessons learned doctrine and complete standard operating procedures on gathering observations, identifying, sharing, and implementing lessons and best practices. The Ukrainian troops also received relevant lessons learned processes for analyzing and implementing experiences of the Ukrainian national contingents in the peace support operations.

Keywords: experience, organizational learning, lessons learned process, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, peace support operations.

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Introduction. Ukraine began its participation in the peace support operations (PSO) after the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine approved the Resolution of July 3, 1992, No. 2538-XII "On the Participation of battalions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces in the conflict zones in the territory of the Former Yugoslavia" (*Military History*, 2021). On July 15, 1992, the first Ukrainian national contingent of the 240th separate special battalion was deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina to take part in the UNPROFOR operation (*Ukrinform*, 2020; *Military History*, 2021).

During last 30 years Ukraine has become one of the biggest contributors of military personnel in the UN peacekeeping operations as well as the most active participant in the NATO-led peace support operations among the Alliance partner countries. Since 1992, almost 50,000 Ukrainian servicemen have participated in 35 peace support operations. For example, in the period from 2006 to 2011, approximately 6,000 Ukrainian servicemen have performed peacekeeping tasks in 13 missions (*Ukrinform*, 2020; *Military History*, 2021). Most of these PSOs have been the UN-led operations, while others have been conducted under the NATO, OSCE and European Union leadership.

Above mentioned peacekeeping activities of Ukraine have allowed our country to receive some extremely important political, economic and military benefits. First of all, they have empowered improving of the security sector of Ukraine, reforming of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) along with developing their interoperability with the NATO countries forces and moving towards the Alliance membership.

In the absence of adequate military training large number of the Ukrainian personnel have got vital experience and military knowledge participating in various peace-support operations. They have become more open to new ideas and reforms. Furthermore, the necessity to upgrade the obsolete lessons learned processes for the Ukrainian national contingents has initiated some fundamental changes in improving of the Ukrainian military learning during its stagnation period (1991–2014) (*Pashchuk*, 2021). Especially, adopting and exploiting of the "Standard operating procedures on analyzing and implementing experiences of the Ukrainian national contingents (personnel) in the peacekeeping operations" (*LL 2011*) become one of the main drivers in the transition from semi-formal to formal organizational learning in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (*Pashchuk*, 2021).

The aim of the paper is to research the organizational learning of experiences of the Ukrainian national contingents in the peace support operations and its impact on developing of military learning within the Armed Forces of Ukraine (July 1992 – February 2022).

The main part of the article. To conduct successful operations, to win wars, the armed forces must not only be well-trained and be better equipped with weapons and military equipment than the foes. The forces must also faster provide military adaption than the enemy, first of all to the tactical, operational, and strategic changes. To achieve this goal, the armed forces have to develop an effective organizational (collective) learning within their troops to improve the productivity of their training and employment, disseminate among the military personnel gained knowledge, lessons and best practices, boost knowledge transformation capabilities. Today, the term "military organizational learning" is defined in many ways and can be described in general as the lessons learned processes by which a military organization (e.g., armed forces, military service, etc.) collects and uses new knowledge gained from experiences or research to adjust organizational norms, doctrines and procedures to minimize the risk of repeating mistakes and increase the chances of achieving success and victories in the future. "Without the correct learning mechanisms, military adaptation can be blocked, or the wider lessons from adaptation can easily be lost, leading to the need to relearn lessons in the field, often at great human and financial cost" (Dyson, 2020: p.1).

Evolution of the organizational learning in the Ukrainian Armed Forces can be divided into two main periods and connected with using of two consecutive systems of military learning:

1) System of Lessons Analysis and Dissemination (SLAD): December 1991 – December 2018.

2) Lessons learned System (LSS): January 2019 – present time.

Despite that the Lessons Learned System was built on the basis of previous System of lessons analysis and dissemination, these systems are completely different, especially in using lessons learned processes and having divergent absorb and transformation abilities. Also, the above-mentioned periods are characterized by non-identical role and contribution of the Ukrainian military learning from the PSOs in developing the organizational learning within the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The SLAD is defined as a set of methods and techniques for using prescribed structure and tools to execute the lessons analysis and

dissemination (*Pashchuk, Pashkovskiy, 2019: 36*). In essence, the SLAD was aimed to provide only potential absorptive capacity (PACAP) (*White Book, 2010; Dyson, 2019: 26*) and knowledge transformation was out of focus (*Pashchuk, Pashkovskiy, 2019: 36*). This system started its functioning in December 1991 when a sovereign Ukraine adapted a legislative and policy framework to create the Ukrainian Armed Forces (*Fluri, Koziel, Yermolaiev, 2013: 47-58, 147-155*). This foundation also included the statutory principles to form the SLAD based on the Soviet military learning methodology (*Pashchuk, 2021*). The SLAD had three main phases of development (*Pashchuk, Pashkovskiy, 2019: 36-43; Pashchuk, 2019: 21; MSR 2020*):

- 1) Stagnation (December 1991 – May 2013).
- 2) Reformation (May 2013 – April 2014).
- 3) Adaptation (April 2014 – December 2018).

During the stagnation and reformation phases for military learning (December 1991 – April 2014) the SLAD was mainly focused on two key directions of knowledge acquisition: firstly, on the military training of forces and, secondly, on employment of the Ukrainian national contingents in the peace support operations. It is generally accepted that at that time the Ukrainian Armed Forces have been persistently ruined (*Wilk, 2017: 6; Ukrinform, 2020: 1-4*). Chronic underfunding and total reduction of the UAF without their significant modernization in conjunction with flourishing corruption have led to a constant decrease of the Ukrainian Armed Forces capabilities as well as to the stagnation of the SLAD.

The first direction of this learning system was predominantly concentrated on the learning the military exercises at the international level. This was due to the constant decline in the Ukrainian troops training, which was characterized by a steady decrease in the number and scale of national military exercises (*Wilk, 2017: 22; Isakov, Yakovlev, Khlopetsky, Vasyliv, 2009: 153-155*). For example, from 1991 to 1995, only one regimental exercise was conducted in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and after that, until 2014, military exercises of this level and above were not conducted at all (*Wilk, 2017: 22*). Also, not adequate level of the troops training influenced the preparation of national contingents for participation in the peace support operations. Strong evidence of inadequate level of the troops training were the headlines in the official media at that time, e.g. “The drill square instead of the range” in the “Narodna Armiiia” newspaper (*Isakov, Yakovlev, Khlopetsky, Vasyliv, 2009: 154*).

Without proper training of the UAF personnel the SLAD bodies were involved in the tasks that were not inherent to them. In contrast to the above, there was a positive trend of steady increase in the number and scale of the international military exercises, including NATO-led exercises. For example, from 2006 to 2011 more than 23,000 Ukrainian servicemen took part in 95 multinational exercises, of which 43 were held in Ukraine (*Military History, 2021: 5*).

But the main aspect of the SLAD functioning was directed on learning of the Ukrainian military experience in the peace support operations. Ukraine has become an active participant in such operations after July 3, 1992. In just for 20 years almost 30,000 Ukrainian servicemen have taken part in more than 23 PSOs (*Military History, 2021: 6*). With not enough funding for the defense sector, Ukrainian participation in the PSOs has helped to improve the troops training, as well as to gain relevant experiences in the armed conflicts as a “third (peacekeeping) force”. In addition, it has contributed to form a large community of military professionals who had practice in international cooperation and get proper military knowledge. These personnel had impact on changing the Ukrainian military culture that was inherited from the Soviet Union. They were open to new progressive ideas and radical reforms to emulate international military best-practices, to establish close military cooperation with foreign partners.

Analyzing the Ukrainian participation in the PSOs some military experts have cited significant shortcomings in the peacekeeping training of the Ukrainian infantry units, primarily, in performing the specific tactics for a wide range of the peace support operations (*Kotelyanets, 2012: 189*). These problems have existed for some Ukrainian national contingents that were employed in different peacekeeping missions, especially in the NATO-led operations. It has become clear that the organizational learning of experiences of the Ukrainian troops in the peace support operations was quite inefficient. After a detailed study of these problems, it has been determined that one of their main causes was a bureaucratic obstacle, namely an absence of the lessons learned bodies to manage and coordinate analysis and implementation of the PSO experiences. To solve this problem, the relevant Lessons Learned Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on organizational learning in the PSOs were developed and adopted in 2011 (*LL 2011*). This Instruction generally described the lessons learned process in the peace support operations and defined

the military bodies that were responsible for managing this process. The Lessons Learned SOP was not perfect and didn't include either the organizational learning terms or appropriate forms of reports on lessons learned, for example, standard template of observation reports. It should be emphasized that till July 2020 the Ukrainian Armed Forces have not had the validated lessons learned doctrine, as well as clear and complete standard operating procedures on gathering observations, identifying, sharing, and implementing lessons and best practices.

In the 1990s, at the end of Cold War which was also accompanied by rapid scientific and technological progress many leading countries have implemented the permanent formal military learning processes (*Dyson, 2019: 2*). But the Ukrainian Armed Forces still used the semi-formal organizational learning. For example, the observations about existed problems and good practices of the national contingents in PSOs as well as their analysis have been presented only in the certain parts of periodic reports and flowed from the bottom up. The effectiveness of this approach was quite low, primarily due to the lack of interest and initiative of the UAF personnel in collecting and submitting observations, as well as due to the low quality of analysis of obtained knowledge (*MSR 2020*). Usually, the high HQs after receiving the information on experiences have not processed it properly but only have consistently transmitted it to bottom, to military units that have used it mainly as a reference material (*MSR 2020*).

The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine led to Moscow's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and beginning of the protracted armed conflict in the Eastern Ukraine in April 2014. It became a main cause and catalyst for radical transforming of the SLAD. Till April 2014 the organizational learning in the PSOs has played a leading role in the Ukrainian military learning and has had a significant impact on developing of the organizational learning within the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The good practices in the PSO organizational learning were broadly used in redirecting the SLAD to analyze and implement the UAF combat experiences and develop the Temporary Lessons Learned SOP, which were adopted on August 9, 2014. This document described the general procedures for learning on experiences of the Anti-terrorist Operation (ATO) and defined the military bodies that were responsible for organizing the lessons learned processes. In addition, the new table of periodic lessons learned reports (14 documents) on the combat experiences was

approved on October 30, 2014. The scope and content of the above formal reports was revised in January 2016. These events can be considered as a starting point in the transition from semi-formal to formal organizational learning in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

For obvious reasons, after the start of the ATO the lesson learned process in the peace support operations has been not the highest priority. This learning activities continued to be implemented in compliance with the old methodological approaches. The Lessons Learned SOP (adapted in 2011) were still used for analyzing and implementing the Ukrainian PSO experiences. There were not any changes in creating lessons learned bodies for learning the PSO experiences and appointing of the lessons learned staff officers as well as lessons learned points of contact.

Five years of enduring Russian aggression (2014-2018) has revealed an urgent need for cardinal improving the UAF Lessons Learned capabilities. It was clear that the SLAD has exhausted all its possibilities. In August of 2018, the Ukrainian military leadership made the decision to focus an initiative on significantly improving of the UAF learning by creating a fundamentally new prospective Lessons Learned System (LLS). This System is defined as a set of methods and techniques for using prescribed structure and tools in order to execute the lessons learned process (*Pashchuk, Pashkovskyi, 2019: 38*). The building of the above System meant the final transition from semi-formal to permanent formal organizational learning (*Dyson, 2019: 2*). 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, Pashkovskyi, 2019: 41; Pashchuk, 2019: 21; MSR 2020; Dyson, Pashchuk, 2022*):

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

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

- 3) Organizing effective lessons learned training for all Armed Forces personnel, especially tailored courses designed specifically for lessons learned staff officers (by December 30, 2019)

- 4) Creating the Lessons Learned Portal (by June 30, 2021).

It can be stated that some tasks have been completed on time, a number of tasks have been performed with a delay, and some have not been accomplished yet. The Lessons Learned Doctrine (*LL 2020*) and the Temporary Lessons Learned SOP (*SOP 2020*) were adopted in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in July 2020, later than scheduled (December 2019). These documents have introduced the lessons learned process within the Armed Forces of Ukraine including the learning procedures of analyzing and implementing experiences of the Ukrainian national contingents in the PSO. At the same time there were not any appointments of the lessons learned staff officers or lessons learned points of contact in the peacekeeping missions to organize military learning process.

Conclusions. Since 1992 Ukraine has become one of the biggest contributors of military personnel in the UN peacekeeping operations as well as the most active participant in the NATO-led peace support operations among the Alliance partner countries. Peacekeeping activities of Ukraine have allowed our country to receive some extremely important political, economic, and military benefits. The necessity to upgrade the obsolete lessons learned processes for the Ukrainian national contingents has initiated some fundamental changes in reforming of the Ukrainian military learning.

Evolution of the organizational learning in the Ukrainian Armed Forces is divided into two main periods with using completely different lessons learned processes and having divergent absorb and transformation abilities. During the first period (December 1991 – December 2018) the Ukrainian Armed Forces have used the lessons learned processes that were mostly based on the Soviet military learning methodology. In 2019 Ukraine started adaptation of the advanced approaches of the leading NATO countries in the organizational learning within the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Also, the above two periods are characterized by non-identical role and contribution of the Ukrainian military learning from the peace support operations in developing the organizational learning within the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Before the Russian armed aggression in 2014 the organizational learning in the peace support operations has played a leading role in the Ukrainian military learning. These activities have had a significant impact on developing of the lessons learned processes in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. One of their key points was adapting of the Lessons Learned Standard Operating

Procedures on organizational learning in the peace support operations in 2011. This document was not perfect, but it gave a positive impetus to further improving of the Ukrainian military learning.

After the start of the Anti-terrorist Operation in April 2014 the lesson learned process in the peace support operations has been not the highest priority. But the good practices in the organizational learning of the peace support operations were broadly used in redirecting the military learning to analyze and implement the combat experiences and develop the Temporary Lessons Learned Standard Operating Procedures in 2014. This document and the new table of periodic lessons learned reports became a starting point in the transition from semi-formal to formal organizational learning in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

With creating of the perspective Lessons Learned System in 2019 the Armed Forces of Ukraine developed the validated lessons learned doctrine and complete standard operating procedures on gathering observations, identifying, sharing, and implementing lessons and best practices. The Ukrainian troops also received relevant lessons learned processes for analyzing and implementing experiences of the Ukrainian national contingents in the peace support operations.

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ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙНЕ ВИВЧЕННЯ І ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ДОСВІДУ ЗБРОЙНИХ СИЛ УКРАЇНИ У МІЖНАРОДНИХ ОПЕРАЦІЯХ ІЗ ПІДТРИМАННЯ МИРУ ТА БЕЗПЕКИ

Стаття присвячена організаційному (колективному) вивченню та впровадженню досвіду українських національних контингентів у міжнародних операціях із підтримання миру та безпеки, а також його впливу на розвиток стандартного процесу вивчення та впровадження досвіду у Збройних Силах України. Вищезазначена діяльність досліджується протягом двох основних періодів еволюції

організаційного вивчення та впровадження досвіду в Збройних Силах України: 1) грудень 1991 р. – грудень 2018 р.; 2) січень 2019 р. – лютий 2022 р.

Необхідність вивчення воєнно-історичних аспектів із аналізу та імплементації досвіду Збройних Сил України в операціях із підтримання миру зумовлена, насамперед, важливістю таких досліджень для забезпечення більш ефективного функціонування сучасної Системи вивчення та впровадження досвіду в умовах протистояння російській збройній агресії. Важливість та актуальність цього науково-практичного завдання визначається також відсутністю в українській історіографії спеціальних досліджень.

Розглянуті у статті два вищезгадані періоди відрізняються, насамперед, процесами та процедурами аналізу та імплементації набутих колективних знань, а також мають різну здатність до їх засвоєння і трансформації. Крім того, вони характеризуються неоднаковою роллю та внеском українського військового досвіду участі в міжнародних операціях із підтримання миру в розвиток організаційного вивчення та впровадження досвіду в Збройних Силах України. До початку російської збройної агресії у 2014 році організаційне вивчення та впровадження досвіду міжнародних операцій із підтримання миру відіграло провідну роль, і ця діяльність мала значний вплив на розвиток процесів вивчення та впровадження досвіду у Збройних Силах України. Після початку Антитерористичної операції у квітні 2014 року з очевидних причин така діяльність не була найвищим пріоритетом. Але практика та передовий досвід аналізу та імплементації досвіду в операціях із підтримання миру широко використовувався для кардинальної переорієнтації на організаційне вивчення та впровадження бойового досвіду і стала відправною точкою подальшого розвитку процесів і процедур вивчення та впровадження досвіду у Збройних Силах України.

Зі створенням у 2019 році перспективної Системи вивчення та впровадження досвіду у Збройних Силах України було розроблено та затверджено Доктрину з вивчення та впровадження досвіду та Інструкцію зі збору спостережень, ідентифікації, поширення та впровадження уроків і передового досвіду. Українські війська також отримали відповідні процедури аналізу та впровадження досвіду українських національних контингентів у міжнародних операціях із підтримання миру та безпеки.

Ключові слова: досвід, організаційне вивчення та впровадження досвіду, процес вивчення та впровадження досвіду, Збройні Сили України, міжнародні операції з підтримання миру та безпеки.