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048

Driving Crisis Leadership Fundamentals in the Swedish Total Defence – Core Concepts and the Road to Cultural Change

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Abstract

Proactivity and decisiveness are two ideals strongly associated with successful crisis management and are emphasized by politicians, researchers, and authorities active in different parts of society. However, despite their intuitive simplicity, several questions arise when operationalizing the concepts in a crisis management practice. This paper examines and discusses various aspects of proactivity and decisiveness, reflecting on how they are used as important building blocks for improving crisis management capacity in Sweden. To support practical applicability, we suggest three aspects of proactivity and highlight the benefits and risks associated with the ideal. Furthermore, we suggest a nuanced interpretation of decisiveness and how it fits into an uncertain environment where decisionmakers need to act both quickly and persistently. In the second part of the paper, we draw upon theory of organizational culture and begin with discussing the heterogenous organizational context constituting the subject for change. We then share lessons learnt from communicating change, highlighting the importance of conceptual harmony, the effects of a narrative, and how experience comes into play when approaching proactivity and decisiveness from a competency perspective. Finally, we elaborate on the difficult question of how to know if a change has taken place.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is common for crisis response evaluations to describe a bureaucratic system that has reacted too slowly and too cautiously. [1][2] On the one hand, such criticism can be downplayed as an expression of hindsight bias [3] or as statements made to score political points. On the other hand, the challenges of reacting rapidly and making adequate decisions based on incomplete information have for decades remained key issues engaging both researchers and practitioners. [4][5] In fact, one might argue that these challenges are some of the cornerstones in the various discourses of Command & Control science and related research fields.

The antidote to slow reactions and overly cautious behavior is typically idealized as proactivity [6] and decisiveness [7]. Not only does the research literature pinpoint a need for such mindsets and behaviors, but the current security situation also affects the policy agendas formed by politicians. For example, in Sweden, the governance of many agencies includes a language calling for a culture of more proactivity and decisiveness. [8]

Today, there seems to be a relatively broad consensus among Swedish authorities that an adjustment of the organizational culture is needed to meet new demands resulting from the changed security situation. However, when adopting a new mindset and operationalizing concepts that are intuitively reasonable but can also be interpreted in slightly different ways, organizations are likely to face challenges: What is the current situation and what is the desired “cultural end state”? How do we measure it? Does everybody need to be equally proactive and decisive?

The purpose of the theoretical and empirical reasoning in this paper is to contribute to a deeper, more nuanced and policy relevant discussion about the meaning of proactivity and decisiveness in a total defense context. Also, how the ideals can - and should - be promoted in a heterogenous arrangement of crisis response actors. Importantly, even though the application is in a Swedish jurisdictional and cultural context, we believe that the

reasoning can also be valuable for similar discussions regarding capacity development in other countries.

This paper includes two interconnected parts. First, we describe the widely used concepts of proactivity and decisiveness and promote the idea of approaching them as qualities that need to be contextualized and critically discussed.

The second part is a reflection on a further implementation of these ideals in a Swedish crisis management and total defense context, using Edgar Schein's established model [9] for organizational culture and cultural change. Schein describes three levels of organizational culture: artifacts (visual), espoused values (how people would describe the culture), and underlying assumptions (normally unconscious and unspoken, or at least hard to articulate). In this latter part, we discuss hurdles in the process of change, as well as experiences of achievements.

Throughout the paper we will regularly use the word crisis, partly due to its commonality in the literature, and partly to simplify the language. The context of total defense typically relates to conflict environments, including gray-zone situations, but we consider our reasoning to be relevant also in crisis situations emerging from natural hazards.

2 PROACTIVITY AND DECISIVENESS

The first intuitive impression of the ideals being proactive and decisive in a crisis situation may be that they are obvious, and need no further justification or explanation. For some, they might even be clichés. However, when digging deeper into the interpretations one quickly realizes that embracing them in action - and understand causality between behavior and operational effect - might be challenging. The conceptual ambiguities can be seen as similar to those characterizing the common (and partly related) concept of mission tactics. Everybody thinks it's good, but the variety of interpretations of what it really means is vast. [10)

2.1 PROACTIVITY

Pearson and Clair [11] describe proactivity in crisis management as the process by which organizations anticipate potential crisis and take actions beforehand to prevent or mitigate their effects, rather than simply reacting once the crisis has occurred. Merriam-Webster dictionary suggests that proactivity is: "acting in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes." [12] According to Swedish policy documents [13] being proactive is being foresightful, preventative and ahead of the curve. It means having the ability to anticipate future developments and a willingness to deal with situations before they become a problem. Proactivity can therefore mean identifying early actions, planning for the long term and preparing to minimize risks, or maximize opportunities.

Being proactive can also relate to the theory of dynamic decision making [14] and Brehmer's DOODA loop [15], here linking to forward-looking sensemaking and planning based on assumptions. Similarly, proactivity is also a key element in intelligence studies and practice. [16] In short, the need for proactivity is widely stated.

However, as Brehmer concludes: proactive decision making based on assumptions also involves risk taking and possible costs. Resources may be tied to tasks that later turn out to be unnecessary. A key challenge, especially in an era characterized by the efficiency mantra, and a crisis management reality where "lean production" (no unnecessary use of resources) occasionally dominates the discourse, an issue we will return to in terms of the dilemma of engaging resources in efforts that from a hindsight perspective might be wrong or inefficient.

In summary, we argue that proactivity can be approached from three slightly different, but interdependent, starting points: 1) Proactivity as mental preparedness, 2) Proactivity from a planning perspective, and 3) Proactivity as measures leading to operational effects.

2.1.1 Proactivity as mental preparedness

Several researchers suggest that a key challenge in crisis management is the failure of imagination. [17][18] One explanation is that we seem to be burdened with what can be called normalcy bias, or normality bias, meaning that we disbelieve or minimize threat warnings. [19] This phenomenon can be seen as an individual perception bias where early warnings are neglected. There is also another phenomenon, more dependent on social relations, that can lead to passivity; the *Cry Wolf* metaphor, originating from Aesop's fable, basically meaning that alarms are raised but without reaction due to desensitization, or "alarm fatigue" [20]. In addition to possible biases, one explanation why responses to crises often are considered to be too little too late, can be found in the analytical capacity of leaders to expand the various trajectories an event can take. [21]

Proactivity as mental preparedness therefore has to do with expanding the imaginary possibility space [22] and

being prepared by creating substitutes for personal experience [23]. It becomes the mental prerequisites for decision making and actual planning.

2.1.2 Proactivity as planning

There seems to be no international consensus on a taxonomy regarding various types of planning, and how they relate to each other. However, in general terms, all (crisis) planning is partly about proactivity. [24][25] In order to narrow down the scope of the following reasoning, we will focus on planning where some kind of threat is at least imminent and planning when management functions are fully established and active.

Even though we have plans as a result of preparedness activities, we cannot expect that such plans will adapt to reality. As a result, continuous adjustments of plans need to be done. In order to do so, whilst not being completely reactive, it becomes necessary to analytically try to understand the event's trajectory. In other words, answer the question: "Where is this heading?" and the important follow-up questions such as "How should we deal with probable consequences in the most efficient way, and what mitigation activities should be carried out?". Working with this type of planning is both an analytical task and a practical skill, often challenged by the complexity in a modern society where cascading effects [26] can be expected.

Proactivity from a planning perspective can also be about "What if" planning, i.e., developing plans for alternative scenarios. "What if" planning (or contingency planning, wargaming, etc.) explores a range of potential future scenarios and their potential impacts. It can include scenarios where planned efforts have no or little effect on the situation, but also plans for what to do if the situation unfolds in unexpected ways. Moreover, "What if" planning can pay attention to additional crises and how to deal with a multi-crises environment. All plans following the logic above should include clear indicators that help to determine when to activate pre-formulated responses [27] and there are numerous tools for these analytical and practical tasks (see for example [28][29][30]). Importantly, therefore, planning is an art in itself, but it is also related to leadership and culture allowing and supporting the explorations described above.

2.1.3 Proactivity as measures leading to operational effects

Proactivity as mental preparedness and proactivity as planning can be seen as internal efforts that have no effects in the operational environment per se. Proactivity as measures, meanwhile, relates to feedforward processes [31] where one process is used to control (or influence) another [32]. It emphasizes the need for acting before a threat has become so apparent that something *must* be done. Such proactive behavior relies on assumptions. One could argue that proactivity as measures leading to operational effects always rely on some kind of planning, even though the planning can be very rudimentary in its character. Other would argue that actions can be carried out almost simultaneously as the situation is assessed and therefore be a result of improvisation. Improvisation is another fuzzy concept, but it can be defined as when creating and executing plans happens simultaneously, without extensive prior deliberation. [33] Proactivity as measures leading to operational effects, meanwhile, has a clear connection to the concept of decisiveness, which is the second core concept treated in this paper.

2.1.4 The proactivity paradox

Regardless of the type of proactivity discussed, proactivity comes with a cost. The cost can, for example, be cognitive burden, time for planning, economy, or perhaps the most important problem: that resources risk being committed to things that later turn out not to have been important. From this perspective, proactivity is about risk management: is it worth investing in something that might be unnecessary and what is the alternative cost? Crisis management, on the other hand, is associated with dynamic decision making [14]: the effects from one decision will influence the conditions for the following. The proactivity paradox here suggests that your ability to be proactive at a later stage may be negatively affected if you act proactively right now, simply because you may have less resources to use for new proactive measures in the future. On the other hand, if your proactivity pays off, you don't have to engage as many resources at a later stage and you can use them for other proactive measures.

2.2 DECISIVENESS

Decisiveness (or synonyms determination or persistence. [34]) is yet another term characterized by certain conceptual confusion. According to Merriam-Webster, it can be seen as firm or unwavering adherence to one's purpose. Cambridge dictionary [35], meanwhile, suggests that decisiveness is the ability to make decisions quickly and confidently. If the latter definition is embraced one could easily slip into the rabbit hole of what decision making really means: is it just about generating

alternatives and making a choice? Or, is it an entire problem-solving cycle including perception, assessment, finding alternatives, making a choice and communicating such choice?

In this paper we relate decisiveness to acting. It could mean taking quick initiatives to formulating an operational intent, formulating a plan, and resolutely putting it to action. Being decisive can thereby be the opposite of being passive, and passivity is known as a feature connected to destructive leadership [36]. However, "not being passive" may be easier said than done, not least due to our knowledge in risk behavior where humans in general seem to act influenced by loss aversion. Loss aversion was introduced as a central part of prospect theory by Kahneman & Tversky [37] and suggests that humans experience losses asymmetrically more severely than equivalent gains. Thus, being passive may be emotionally more tempting than taking action in an uncertain environment partly characterized by potential losses.

Importantly, decisiveness as an ideal should not promote a behavior that is not founded in analytical reasoning. We are well aware of descriptive research showing that fast intuitive decision making - relying on heuristics - can lead to all kinds of problems due to bias and noise. [37][38] Whether decisiveness conceptually should cover decision processes as a form of "general attitude" following each step in a conscious (or unconscious) decision process, can probably be debated. Regardless, the risk for advocating an ideal prioritizing action over thinking is considerable and will be discussed below (2.2.3).

2.2.1 Political governance

In the Swedish Defense Committee's report describing the goals for the total defense 2025-2030 the importance of increasing the speed in building capacity is clearly stressed. [39] As Frykmer et al. write: "there is a push for a `forward leaning culture marked by forceful action´". [40] Swedish authorities with a special assignment in the total defense arrangement have new revised instructions emphasizing the need for decisiveness, or similar formulations. This adjustment of policies is not only oriented towards capacity building, but also a desired behavior in a response situation, and all what lies in between.

2.2.2 Academic suggestions

The need for decisiveness in crisis situations is also discussed in the academic community (see [41][42][43]). As already indicated, the concept can be a bit obscure and relate to various aspects from culture to cognition, and also to different managerial steps. Many crisis/disaster researchers appear to link it to decision making. For example, Dunin-Barkowsky [43] argues that decisiveness is not about sticking to a plan but being able to act swiftly and adjust rapidly based on new information. Besiou and Van Wassenhove [44] refer to it as a countermeasure for decision paralysis created by a fear of making the wrong move. Crucially, there seems to be a strong agreement that indecisiveness is undermining response. Even though it is not a scientific paper the Sendai Framework [45] also brings up the need for decisiveness in response.

2.2.3 Just do something?!

Decisiveness should not be interpreted as a cowboy mentality, promoting leaders to "just act" without thinking about how the initiative relates to strategic intents or initiatives taken by others. Sometimes a good decision is to wait. Decisiveness without an understanding of various system perspectives simultaneously can be counterproductive and impose danger on others. Without pursuing the conceptual rabbit hole of mission tactics, we see decisiveness as an ideal that must be guided by overall aims and intents, but also have boundaries.

There is also another strategic issue that brings challenges to decisiveness, namely the temporal aspects of crisis management. Not all situations are 100-meter sprints. A continuous acceleration can probably lead to individual and organizational burn-out and make endurance hard to achieve.

This delicate balance between acceleration and deceleration is brought up, and is empirically supported, in Frykmer et al's [40] writing:

*"*To meet the 'new normal' of intertwined and prolonged crises, or sets of crises, we suggest that crisis management organizations develop capabilities to not only speed up but also to slow down activities in relation to the temporality of crises. Drawing on the slow movement philosophy we argue that crisis management needs to balance acceleration with deliberate deceleration, during one event or across several, emphasizing the need for rest, recuperation, and mindful decision-making within crisis organizations to avoid burnout and to sustain the system's long-term performance. On the one hand, it is crucial to ramp up and respond quickly when necessary; on the other, it is equally important to slow down and reduce activity when the impact begins to subside. In sum, it is about pacing and balancing fast with slow.*"*

3 CHANGING CULTURE – A THEORETICAL STARTING POINT

So far, we can conclude that proactivity and decisiveness are ideals integrated in Sweden's updated total defense paradigm. The policy agenda suggests a cultural change, and that such change must happen rapidly. There is, therefore, a decisiveness in the quest for promoting more decisiveness and proactivity. But culture does not change simply because some someone says it must. According to one of the most influential researchers on organizational culture – Edgar Schein – organizational culture changes because humans experience new ways of conducting their work more efficiently and relevant. To change a culture, both time and reflection is required. [46]

Schein emphasizes the connection between cultural change and leadership by suggesting that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture, and cultural change tends to take time.

3.1 EDGAR SCHEIN IN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

Organizational culture plays a central role in how organizations interpret, act, and learn in conjunction with crises. According to Schein, organizational culture consists of three levels: artifacts (visible expressions such as language and routines), stated values (goals, strategies, and principles), and basic assumptions (unconscious beliefs about reality, people, and the organization's mission). Basic assumptions are particularly difficult to change because they are deeply rooted, often unconsciously, and collectively defended by members of the organization. Cultural change is a process that requires the organization to actively question these assumptions, which rarely happens without a strong external impulse. In the Swedish context, the war in Ukraine could probably serve as such an impulse and act as a catalyst for cultural change.

Crises involve creating interpretations and coping patterns that no longer work, something that can create a so-called "unfreezing" process. When the organization's previous ways of understanding and dealing with its environment are challenged, an openness to alternative ways of thinking and acting arises.

This dynamic is particularly important for understanding the development of crisis management capabilities. By reflecting on experiences in a crisis and questioning previous assumptions – for example about control, hierarchy or decision making – an organization can change its culture in a way that increases its ability to deal with future uncertainty. [46]

Organizational culture is a multifaceted research discipline and just like in many other social sciences there are alternative - and sometimes competing - theories. Schein represents what is called a functional perspective. The functional perspective on cultural change has been criticized from an interpretative perspective [47] suggesting that cultural change is very difficult due to its multitude of values and meanings and the unpredictability of how humans react to change. In addition to the interpretative perspective there is what can be called a critical perspective, suggesting that a change of organizational culture is beyond managerial control and just a managerial fantasy. [47]

Whilst we don't engage in the deeper academic arguments surrounding these complex matters, we are aware of the problematic nature of talking about cultural change as something that can be understood from a simple cause-and-effect logic. However, Shein's basic structure of discussing organizational culture seems to fit our purpose and helps us to reflect on our empirical experiences.

4 REFLECTIONS ON THE ROAD TO CULTURAL CHANGE

In this section we will discuss the prerequisites and challenges associated with promoting a cultural change among numerous different organizations. Initially, we will reflect on the heterogenous starting point and describe what we see as various differences among the many organizations involved in the process of change. Understanding such differences, several of which are likely generic and recur in many countries, can hopefully serve as an input for developing future strategies for organizational-wide cultural change in crisis management. Then, we share our experience of being a part of the policy implementation focusing on the process of change rather than the subjects for change. Finally, we reflect on the challenges of understanding if cultural change, regarding proactivity and decisiveness, has taken place.

The empirical insights in this chapter should be read as a balancing of three different insider perspectives: one general manager, one researcher and one senior developer/implementer. We are aware that we bring bias into the analytical reasoning, but it is hard to say exactly how it has affected the content.

4.1 THE HETEROGENOUS STARING POINT(S)

In the Swedish context, Total Defense is not an organization. Rather, it is a collective effort, i.e., something that is carried out by different segments of society. The resources undertaking the task are normally

associated with formal organizations, such as authorities, volunteer organizations, and private companies. Similar heterogenous compilations of resources are also engaged in other types of "natural" crises, both in mitigation, preparedness, and response.

Even though the need for "ramping up", i.e., being more proactive and showing decisiveness, can be seen as a general call, Swedish authorities have a special role ensuring activities take place. These authorities are arranged at a local, a regional, a higher regional, and a national level, but also in twelve sectors, such as Rescue Services and the protection of the civilian population, Order and Security, Food supply, etc.

The authorities are different in their tasks, sizes, cultures, and experiences of crisis management. Thus, implementing a new norm cannot follow a one-size-fits-all logic. However, we have identified five somewhat interlinked variables that need to be considered when working with cultural change in an organizational-wide context: 1. Various cultural departures, 2. Internal culture of cultures, 3. Organizational rigidity, 4. Resources for change, and 5. Structural configuration.

It is important to note that we are well aware of the fact that there is always another perspective on a complex system and that there are other analytical choices to be made. The reasoning below is formulated with analytical humbleness and should not be seen as uncriticizable claims. Having that said, we believe that empirical reflections, subjective as they may be, are important for understanding the dynamics taking place here and now.

4.1.1 Cultural departures

The first thing that comes to mind when reflecting on organizational heterogeneity and different conditions for cultural change, is that some organizational cultures – or parts of them – are probably closer to the suggested ideals than others, simply because they are forced to, due to their working conditions. Organizations with operational tasks, such as first response organizations, may already cultivate a culture where certain behaviors associated with proactivity and decisiveness are parts of the organizational, or sub-organizational DNA. Using Schein's theoretical reasoning; some organizations have the proposed ideals as stated values, as well as in the basic assumptions. Other organizations may have other stated values and basic assumptions, for example emphasizing the need for solid decision support based on verified facts and long-term investigations, thereby partly challenging the crisis management ideals dealt with in this paper.

4.1.2 Internal culture of cultures

Connected to the reasoning above, it appears that a single organization often includes various cultures in itself. Parts of the tasks carried out by a governmental agency, for example, is continuously characterized by a sense of urgency, whilst other tasks are more related to system administration and maintenance. To sweepingly talk about "a cultural change" in general may therefore be misunderstood as some kind of radical cultural intervention, when the reality rather calls for precision. Supporting proactivity and decisiveness from a more operational mindset is not meant to replace aspects such as system administration, maintenance, and investigations necessary for a long-term functionality and time-consuming in-depth analyses.

4.1.3 Organizational rigidity

The next condition that seems to matter when it comes to changing crisis management culture has to do with the size and history of the organization. Kotter [48] suggests that the bigger the organization and the longer it has operated the more deeply rooted are the habits and norms, an insight supported by other scholars such as Hannan and Freeman [49]. Put simply, a large old organization can be rigid and reluctant to change, with all its advantages and disadvantages. Here, we once again stress that the cultural change relating to proactivity and decisiveness shouldn't be seen as a radical transformation of an entire culture, that might be fully functional in an everyday setting. Rather, it can be an addition to, or a substitute for, a certain piece of the intricate puzzle forming an entire organizational culture. But regardless of how extensive the change is intended to be, an organization's rigidity connected to size and history matters, and various levels of organizational rigidity calls for different strategies for change.

4.1.4 Resources for change

The fourth variable creating different starting points and prerequisites for cultural change, or partial cultural change, has to do with resources for making the change. According to Schein, resources are needed to tell a story on why the change is needed. Time must be spent on education, reflection and dialogue between leaders and employees. Different organizations have varying resources to work with for changing cultures and if not enough resources are engaged - or time spent - the change will most likely just affect the layer of organizational culture that has to do with visible

expressions, such as language, whilst not affecting real behavior.

4.1.5 Structural configuration

The final aspect that can create a heterogenous landscape of organizational crisis management cultures and conditions for cultural change, has to do with what we call structural configuration. By structural configuration we mean how the organization is designed: is it fragmented and has several physical locations? How many hierarchical levels are there, and how are the mandates distributed? Does most of the intraorganizational interaction happen online or in physical spaces?

The structural configuration can partly determine how the change of culture takes place, thus effecting the design of strategies. A decentralized organization may have better conditions for trying new behaviors and allowing changes to spread organically compared to more centralized organizations. A more centralized organization with an influential leader will probably show other patterns of influence leading to cultural change. Relating to this observation we oppose Tasoulis et al's [47] claim that a change of organizational culture is beyond any managerial efforts. From our viewpoint organizational change seems to take place in different ways in different organizations.

4.2 COMMUNICATING AND SUPPORTING CHANGE IN A MULTI-ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING

Drawing from the previous reasoning, the change of crisis management culture shouldn't be understood as a radical overhaul of basic assumptions, stated values, and artifacts to (metaphorically) add and partly replace certain cultural components significant for crisis management capacity.

While the previous section (4.1) elaborates on the organizational scene as a subject for change, this section highlights three concrete learning points from the process of change, predominantly from a communication perspective. Namely; 1. The importance of conceptual harmony, 2. The effects of a narrative and 3. Experience is competence.

4.2.1 The importance of conceptual harmony

Without a coherent understanding of key concepts, joint operations will be challenging. [50] If the diversity of interpretations of proactivity and decisiveness is great, unharmonized expectations of the other's behavior will likely lead to friction and a less efficient and effective response. In order to go beyond an adjustment of symbolic language - and actually support collective behavior - one step in a process of change is conceptual alignment: not only between various organizations but also between organizational levels. We've experienced a combination of impatience and enthusiasm leading to local initiatives concerning conceptual framing but this phenomenon calls for responsiveness and a continuous calibration dialogue. The organizational environment as a whole is dynamic and promoting an overarching discourse is no straight forward top-down intervention. A key question to raise is: When are various interpretations of key concepts similar enough not to give rise to excessive misunderstandings and frictions?

4.2.2 The effects of a narrative

In crisis management organizations, as in most organizational contexts, voluntary cultural change is more efficient than cultural change due to coercion. [51] We argue that the road to more proactiveness and decisiveness in a Swedish crisis management context partly relies on internal motivation on an individual level. However, it is hard to identify and follow simple cause and effect relations explaining who is motivating whom and how. The current security situation has led to changes in the political language, which in turn has changed the governance of governmental authorities. It has also led to a change in media content. Generally speaking, armed conflicts scenarios appear to have led to a general engagement in crisis management issues and increasing expectations on crisis managers.

Based on our experiences the motivation for a cultural change comes from many different sources, also from traditional media and social media, but the current war narratives are somewhat the same: In order to cope with conflict situations challenging many aspects of society concurrently, everyone has to "step up". How such a narrative is shaping an entire public dialogue is subject for numerous articles and we will content ourselves with stating that the current narrative appears to be a more powerful incentive for rapid change than other crisis narratives.

4.2.3 Experience is competence

So far, we have mainly talked about proactivity and decisiveness as ideals primarily manifested as behaviors based on thinking related to culture. However, proactivity and decisiveness can also be treated as competences that can be trained. In addition to knowledge (about their conceptual meanings, critical reflections on potential costs and other downsides with exaggerations etcetera)

we argue that experience is key for functional proactivity and decisiveness. Crisis management is partly an art, and therefore individuals need to make sense and assess situations based on a range of different impressions and estimations that are hard to describe from outside. We have emotions, heuristics and other complexifying qualities that play a role in what we do. Without understanding all intricate details of how to build competence, we remind ourselves; if you practice you will get better.

4.3 How do we know that there is a cultural change?

As stated in many research papers [47] there are various types of thresholds when it comes to cultural change. One is the internal assessment that change is not necessary because a new norm is already implemented. This leads us to the fundamental question: how do we know a permanent change has taken place?

Returning to Schein's idea that organizational change will not take place if basic assumptions are not challenged, measuring proactivity and decisiveness by studying artefacts and stated values is not enough. The two words have positive connotations and organizations may quite effortlessly introduce them into policy documents without any real impact on behavior.

Three approaches that go beyond document analyses are: 1) understanding basic assumptions and values by conducting interviews with various crisis managers trying to understand their mindsets leading to certain behaviors, 2) studying actual outcomes of response operations, and 3) studying behavior among crisis response managers.

The methodological challenges associated with the interview approach are numerous. It is easy to say what the questioner wants to hear and what you think you were thinking during a situation doesn't have to be the same as what you actually thought. Similarly, the way you remember the way you acted is not necessarily the same as the way you actually acted.

The second approach, studying the outcomes of response operations - real ones or simulations - is intuitively appealing: did the organization(s) prevent escalation? Were the needs following the crises taken care of within reasonable time?

While this approach may be feasible, it also comes with difficult challenges. In complex systems, processes and behaviors can be exemplary and yet lead to poor outcomes due to factors beyond one's control. And, vice versa, good results can occur despite reprehensible behavior. To be concrete: a wild fire can be extinguished before it gets too big simply because it starts to rain while the crises managers are sleeping on their duty.

The least problematic approach for understanding if the level of proactivity and decisiveness has increased may be by studying actual behavior in exercises/simulations and real crisis response operations. However, this approach is also not without methodological challenges and may result in partly subjective expert opinions.

Importantly, the problematization above should not be interpreted as an argument for avoiding efforts of measuring (qualitatively or quantitatively) the ability of being proactive or decisive, nor trying to understand if a cultural change has taken place. However, it can be seen as a reminder of the need for an analytical and humble approach in such efforts.

5 SUMMATIVE CONCLUSION

In this paper we have interpreted and analyzed the two interlinked concepts of proactivity and decisiveness as leadership ideals for crisis managers on various levels. We consider the ideals as rooted in an organizational culture also allowing for more deliberate risk-taking. Seeing the behavioral aspects of both proactivity and decisiveness on a continuum enables a more nuanced discussion where context matters. From a strategic perspective we consider the current efforts of increasing crisis management capability as moving the "default values", i.e., the average standard behaviors, to be more of proactivity and decisiveness.

We emphasize that proactivity and decisiveness should take place within certain frames, normally stated in a commander's intent or - when discussing multi-organizational endeavors - joint intents that have been agreed upon prior to, or in the early phase of a response. Importantly, the reasoning on proactivity and decisiveness is applicable to the process of developing such intentions too and the ideals should be discussed at various organizational levels, all associated with certain conditions for management.

We have also reflected on the conditions for a heterogenous compilation of societal resources to become more proactive and decisive as a whole and can conclude that the conditions for change look very different in different parts of the system. Acknowledging and accepting these differences in joint discussions is key. The organizational heterogeneity reminds us of the importance of a nuanced reasoning and hinders us from imagining that it is possible to radically change entire organizational cultures, but rather influence parts of them.

Based on our engagement in the collective efforts of becoming more proactive and decisive we stress the importance of conceptual harmony, concluding that the international security situation as a dominating narrative is a powerful catalyst for change, thereby lifting experience as a key competence aspect of proactivity and decisiveness.

We have presented various challenges in measuring the degree of proactivity and decisiveness as organizational features. We lean towards a focus on behavior rather than on documents and operational outcomes. Something that can be seen as value-based logic, stimulating questions such as: what actions can I stand for regardless of the outcome?

Finally, a collective movement towards more proactivity and decisiveness will not eliminate all reoccurring challenges associated with crisis management, but it is arguably an important aspect in capacity development adapted to a volatile global environment characterized by antagonistic threats, climate change, and black swans.

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