UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE IN THE PROCESS OF COMMANDER’S DECISION-MAKING

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ABSTRACT
The uncertainty tolerance is an example of a phenomenon, the value of which is increasing in all spheres of modern life. In the article, uncertainty tolerance is interpreted through the prism of the concept of authoritarian individuality, dispositional models and algorithms for managerial decision-making. Semantically, uncertainty tolerance and intolerance are decoded by the authors as a personality trait, socio-psychological setting, cognitive-perceptual formation, and as a potential source of threat.

It was found that uncertainty tolerance is a multiplicity of complex reactions that have a situation-specific variable. With this approach, the future of the individual is perceived as a source of discomfort, potential danger, and causes feelings of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. On the contrary, a person with a high level of uncertainty tolerance understands the future as an opportunity to get new experience.

85 officers-trainees of Ivan Chernyakhovsky National Defense University of Ukraine participated in our study. It was defined that the subjects of uncertainty, which is mainly caused by the complexity of the situation, are experiencing negative emotions and stress. We identified two types of coping strategies among the ways of overcoming uncertainty: problem-oriented and emotionally-oriented. Uncertainty factors that have a significant influence on the commander’s decision-making process and basic behavioural strategies to reduce the impact of uncertainty on the decision-making were investigated.

It was found out that it is important for the decision-maker to develop the ability to regulate the course of his mental states. The article concludes that uncertainty enables a commander to obtain, find and implement a solution, which does not come from his life experience, but, in turn, unlocks his potential. On the contrary, a constant desire for certainty often leads, at the same time, to static, stagnant, "vicious circle" past mistakes.

Keywords: tolerance; intolerance; uncertainty; decision-making; commander; coping strategy; difficult situation; stress.

Formulation of the problem in general. The existing approaches to the education and upbringing of the individual (in the family, at school, at the institute) not always teach how to act in the uncertainty conditions. When entering the adulthood period, a young individual is often trained to act only in accordance with the given algorithm, to follow standards, rules, instructions. This implies, that a recent school graduate, who is accustomed to the specific daily homework, having entered a higher military educational institution, has to deal with the absence of a single
correct algorithm of actions, whereas the proposed methods of learning seem unusual, undefined, unspecified. In future, after graduation from a higher military education institution, the young officer should solve not only the task, but also the problem. Unlike the task, the problem will always lack the raw data that you will need to collect and evaluate yourself, while dealing with contradictions and differences. With this approach, uncertainty becomes a stress factor for many officers. If the situation of uncertainty in the civilian life, does not constitute any significant threats to the life of the individual and the surrounding environment, apart from the negative mental reactions, then the situation of uncertainty in the combat conditions dramatically differs in the level of experience and responsibility, possible consequences.

To sum up, it is worth noting that the problem of uncertainty tolerance of the commanders is extremely urgent nowadays, given the six-year time of hostilities in eastern Ukraine, accompanied by the use of hybrid methods of warfare, which each time create new situations of uncertainty.

Therefore, the purpose of the article is to recognise the problem of the commander’s decision-making process, to determine the level of tolerance for uncertainty, to identify the components of uncertainty that have a significant impact on the commander’s decision-making process, and to define main behavioural strategies to reduce the impact of uncertainty on the decision-making.

The analysis of the recent research and publications. The notion of tolerance of uncertainty has been analysed by means of different approaches. The first is represented by the concept of authoritarian individuality. In 1948-1949, E. Frankel-Brunswick introduced the concept of "tolerance for ambiguity", that refers to a two-digit, dynamically changing and contradictory situation. The content of the concept of tolerance for uncertainty is seen as the opposite of the concept of uncertainty intolerance, which characterises the individuality of the authoritarian type. Intolerance was defined by the scientist as a tendency to make decisions on the principle of "black and white", i.e. quickly proceeding to clarity, without taking into account any complex realities, and rejecting the needs of other people. The psychological nature of uncertainty tolerance reveals the phenomenon of attitudes associated

with interpersonal tolerance, impartiality, objectivity of judgments and judgments, cognitive and behavioural flexibility (Frenkel-Brunswick, 1948).

The second approach to the study of the tolerance for uncertainty is presented by the dispositional models, the source of which is the S. Badner's concept of perception. This approach preserves the continuity of the psychology of individuality, but represents an understanding of uncertainty tolerance as a stable personal characteristic, which allows to describe and predict the behaviour of a person in a situation of uncertainty. Tolerance for uncertainty is viewed as a personal continuum, a pole of the scale, opposite to the uncertainty intolerance, reflecting cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses. This approach has also defined the concept of "uncertainty", which meant unspecified stimuli and situations, combined with the parameters of novelty, complexity, non-solvability (Badner, 1962).

The third approach appeals to decision-making models and shifts the focus of the attention from the sphere of individuality to the sphere of interaction between personality and situation. Uncertainty tolerance is seen as a choice among several alternatives combined with uncertainty and risk. The concepts of "objective uncertainty" and "subjective uncertainty" have resulted in the consideration of the phenomenon in the context of subject-activity methodology, which focuses not just on the parameters of external stimulation, but also on its mental representation. The self-presentation is a source of transformation of the situation, which collectively determines the direction of the mental activity.

Psychologists are studying the phenomenon of tolerance for uncertainty and uncertainty intolerance on the basis of different conceptual approaches. For example, tolerance for uncertainty is seen as a personality trait. F. Hartmann, B. Hazen, N. Rotter view it as a basic, time-resistant personality trait that influences interaction between people and behaviour in different situations. This notion is sometimes identified as a feature that enables a person to withstand the uncertainty of individual principles in the process of their gradual change.

J. Litman and O. Lukovitska consider tolerance for uncertainty as a socio-psychological setting with a three-component structure. S. Bochner and R. Norton define
tolerance for uncertainty as a cognitive-perceptual entity that plays a significant role in evaluating probable outcomes in uncertain situations. They also claim, that uncertainty intolerance means the perception of uncertainty as a topical or potential source of a threat.

Psychologists R. Brislin, R. Hallman, P. Lushin have developed an approach to treating uncertainty tolerance as the ability of the individual to accept conflict and tension in situations of uncertainty, to resist the incoherence and contradictions of information, the ability to feel positive emotions in new, unstructured situations and enjoy being in such situations. J. Hofstedt interprets tolerance for uncertainty as a cultural component that determines emotional response (attitude) to risk and ambiguity.

Moreover, D. McLane, J. Herman and J. Ray define tolerance for uncertainty as the multiplicity of reactions (from invasion to attractiveness), complex, dynamically uncertain, or having contradictory interpretations of stimuli, and uncertainty intolerance as a situation-specific variable.

S. Anderson, K. Stoycheva, A. Schwartz, T. Kornilova treat tolerance for uncertainty as a characteristic of individual self-regulation of decisions and actions in conditions of uncertainty and readiness to risk in choosing how to resolve uncertain situations. They identify uncertainty intolerance as a sign of depression, when a person is concerning the negative aspects of life.

The presentation of the main material. Decision-making is rightly considered to be central in the multifaceted commander's activity. The "decision-making" function is prescribed by the commander's social status, which allows him to use both own and environmental objective capabilities, subjective qualities to influence the course of events. The commander is responsible for the consequences of the chosen opportunities. In this regard, within the framework of social psychology of management, the set of traits and personality characteristics of the commander, which will ensure the success of his leadership, are being searched for. Behaviour in the decision-making process, especially in the uncertainty conditions, is the result of reflecting the public demands for the commander’s individual activity.

The commander’s managerial activity plays a particularly important role in tense social and psychological situations as they lead to the acceleration of the decision-making process in the conditions of information and time deficiency. When the threats are absent and the decision does not lead to the loss of human and material capital, the decision-making may be customary (routine), and the commander himself will limit its implementation by means of the control function. At the same time, in the situations of uncertainty and risk, that imply a rapid change in decision-making schemes and the search for alternatives, the commander's activity is accompanied by a high search activity for options and paths of kaleidoscopic emergence of dangerous tasks.

Even if none of the proposed alternatives of the event development does not fully satisfy the commander, he must make a decision, i.e. a "volitional act", choosing one of the options, relying on his professionalism, intelligence, intuition. The choice is made even when it is impossible to reduce the prevalence of one of the two existing alternatives to a single criterion. If the prevalence of one of the proposed options is definite, then we can talk about the typical task of finding the right solution, where the intellectual abilities and critical thinking of the commander will not obviously play a key role (Hmilar, 2018).

The psychological decision theory takes into account personality traits, which play an important role in the decision-making process. The most important functions of psychological decision theory are the prediction of human behaviour and the explanation of the processes, which determine such behaviour. There are three possible attitudes to applying this theory to the problems of uncertainty: 1) tolerance and intolerance; 2) inclination and disinclination; 3) indifference. Depending on the subject's attitude to uncertainty, the same situation may be perceived as defined, partially uncertain. In this context, factors that relate to the subject and the decision-making process must be taken into account during the research and assessment of the uncertainty.

In modern literature, the concept of tolerance for uncertainty describes the processes of personal self-regulation in the absence of stable choices and the impossibility of applying established ready-made solutions. On the one hand, this concept can be treated as the acceptance of conditions of uncertainty and the willingness
to function productively under such conditions. On the other hand, it is the avoidance of uncertainty, the fear of it, feeling of stress in new, unusual situations (Kornylova T. V. & other, 2010). The difference should be viewed in detail.

Individuals with a high level of tolerance for uncertainty, search for solutions, ways to solve a particular problem and make decisions taking into account the variability and inconsistency of the context. The perception of the future is seen as an opportunity to gain new experience that gives rise to a sense of hope, enthusiasm, an opportunity to make a choice. Individuals with predominant intolerance for uncertainty (ITU) in conditions of uncertainty exhibit confusion, "stupor", inability to act in the absence of clear benchmarks.

The future is perceived as a source of discomfort and potential dangers that cause feelings of fear, anxiety and uncertainty. The perception of life is generally defined as black and white, one-dimensional. They are not ready to accept reality in all its ambiguity and complexity; they tend to deny that it does not fit into a rigidly set model. They need a template, a ready-made algorithm for solving a particular problem. Each decision is usually perceived as a turning point, after which it will be difficult to return and make the "second move". The value of the decision is often overestimated, which as a result complicates the decision-making process. In communication with others they constantly strive to achieve maximum clarity, accuracy and unambiguity. There arises a need to know as much as possible information about others, sometimes rejecting their right to personal space. This leads to difficulties in respecting the boundaries in relationships. An uncertainty tolerance is one of the key components in the system of personal choice and decision making in an uncertain environment. For instance, uncertainty tolerance is seen as the ability of the individual to act productively in the face of uncertainty and to solve tasks characterised by a significant degree of uncertainty (Kornylova T. V. & other, 2010).

**The Method**

In order to define the uncertainty tolerance level of the officers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine during the decision-making process, we conducted a test using S. Badner's technique "Uncertainty Tolerance" (adapted by G. Soldatova). With the help of this technique, we determined the levels of uncertainty intolerance of commanders, and also tried to find out, which factors have the worst influence on the commander’s decision-making in the situation of uncertainty. This technique has made it possible to identify three main factors that can adversely affect the commander’s decision-making process, namely: the novelty factor, the factor of the complexity of the received information or situation, the factor of uncertainty. The study involved 85 officers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (from majors to lieutenant colonels) who study at the staff command institute of Ivan Chernyakhovsky National Defense University of Ukraine.

**The Results of the Test**

The analysis of the conducted research has made it possible to obtain the following results. According to the obtained data in the course the psychological study, 5% of the subjects had a high level of intolerance for uncertainty. For a given category of the commanders, the decision-making process in the uncertainty conditions can cause a number of negative psychological reactions. The novelty, the complexity, the uncertainty of the situation and the lack of clear algorithms of actions cause confusion. Such commanders often wait for the instructions from senior commanders, delay decision-making, try to achieve maximum clarity, under any circumstances, to avoid uncertainty, which is perceived as a source of potential danger, fear, anxiety, and lack of confidence. These data prove the intolerance and complexity of the uncertainty experience, manifestation of negative attitude and feeling of unpleasant emotions, sometimes stress and anxiety in the subjectively difficult, ambiguous, uncertain situations.

The vast majority of respondents (80%) have an average level of uncertainty intolerance. This indicates a sufficient level of both psychological training and professional skills, which help commanders act in complex and extreme situations, as well as to take responsibility for the decisions. Although the timeliness and correctness of the decision will depend on the degree of complexity and uncertainty of the situation.

Low levels of uncertainty intolerance were found in 15% of the respondents. This is an example that, in fact, only 15% of commanders have a high level of uncertainty tolerance. These officers are constantly searching optimal solutions, answers, ways to solve a particular problem,
Despite the uncertainty conditions, and make decisions based on the variability and contradiction of the context. They do not accept stereotyped solutions, always have a creative approach to problem-solving, despite the complexity level. The uncertainty situation leads them to find non-standard, non-directive and optimal approaches to solve it.

The summary of the results of empirical study has made it possible to identify the factors that influence the formation of the uncertainty intolerance of the surveyed officers when making decisions in the uncertainty conditions, concerning the results on different scales (novelty of the problem, complexity of the problem, non-solvability of the problem).

According to the obtained results, it was found out that the novelty factor negatively affects 1% of the respondents (high level of intolerance), has a low effect on 14% of the respondents (low level of intolerance), and 80% of the respondents has an average result. This, in turn, may indicate that the novelty of the problem does not create significant difficulties for the commander’s decision-making process. In fact, it mainly influences the emotions of the individual, which the surveyed officers control properly.

On the contrary, the complexity factor was inversely proportional, which adversely affects the officer’s tolerance. Thus, for 28% this factor is crucial and for the remaining 72% it also plays a significant role (they have an average level of intolerance). None of the surveyed mentioned that this factor did not affect him. This situation indicates the difficulties associated with cognitive processes in solving complex problems in the uncertainty situation and making quick, correct decisions by commanders.

A similar situation was noted concerning the factor of non-solvability of the problem. Only 6% of the surveyed commanders are not significantly influenced by this factor. For the remaining 94% of the respondents, this factor plays a significant role (80% of respondents have a medium level of intolerance and 14% have a high level of intolerance). These indicators prove the complexity of the uncertainty situation that is associated with cognitive processes, which are transmitted into the behavioural plane and become the factor of non-solvability. It becomes too difficult for commanders to make decisions in such situations and will

| Intolerance levels | The number of participants, % |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Low                | 15                            |
| Medium             | 80                            |
| High               | 5                             |

Table 1

The levels of uncertainty intolerance of commanders

![Fig. 1. The main factors influencing the intolerance for uncertainty](chart.png)
depend on their personal qualities.

**The Analysis**

The vast majority of commanding officers have an average level of tolerance for uncertainty that enables them to make decisions in different situations. However, there are considerable difficulties if this uncertainty situation is complex (the factor of the perception of uncertainty as a problem is predominant) and hard to solve. And the more complicated the task is, the greater the level of intolerance for uncertainty can be indicated.

This leads to the understanding that the development of the ability to tolerate uncertainty can be viewed as one of the successful coping strategies. The readiness of the commander to act lacking information, without the clear guidelines and ready-made templates makes him more adaptable. Such a commander analyses the real situation more deeply. He is focused on solving the problem, not avoiding it due to the insufficient data. He can also rebuild, change a strategy, make non-standard decisions in case of necessity.

Uncertainty is often seen as a factor that complicates different life situations. That is why, the methods to overcome it are often referred to as so-called coping strategies. There are different classifications of coping strategies in the psychological literature. For example, S. Folkman and R. S. Lazarus proposed a classification, which indicates two main types – problem-focused and emotionally-oriented coping (Herman, 2010). The problem-focused coping, according to the authors, is related to the attempts of a person to improve the relations "man-environment". This can be a change in the assessment of the situation, finding information on how to deal with the problem, planning your actions to overcome any difficulties. Emotionally-oriented coping includes thoughts and actions that help reduce the impact of a stressful situation on the psyche. These thoughts or actions give a sense of relief, but are not aimed at eliminating the threatening situation. They are simply making the person feel better. It can be avoidance of problematic situations, imaginary or behavioural distancing, humour, use of tranquillizers and so on.

There are two strategies that can be applied in situations of uncertainty:

1. The self-creation of certainty if it is possible.

For example, an individual has a difficult task. He has an idea of what results he might get after coping with the problem, but he does not have a ready algorithm for solving it. However, he can develop a plan to follow, that, in case of necessity, can be adjusted by preserving the basic algorithm to help the person reach the goal.

2. The unconditional acceptance of uncertainty as a fact that cannot be influenced. For example, a person faces a disease that cannot be completely cured. The development of the disease is difficult to predict, and the individual is in a state of uncertainty about his future. If a person cannot objectively influence this situation, it is important to be able to accept it and concentrate on solving problems other than experiencing stress caused by the state of uncertainty. To a greater extent, this strategy refers to emotionally-oriented coping.

Our world is often viewed as very uncertain nowadays. It is difficult to predict what will happen in a month, in a few years. If we mentally built a scenario of our lives, we have no guarantee that we will be able to put it into practice. In these circumstances, one way to maintain internal balance is to create and maintain certainty on your own. To accomplish this, an individual can rely on rules, norms, algorithms that he has developed, or those that are offered by the society. The person maintains certainty and continues to move in the presupposed direction in spite of any circumstances. In this case, the methods of achieving goals can be repeatedly adjusted. A person is “an island of stability” in the stormy ocean of the outside world. It is important to be able to separate the uncertainty of the outside world from the own internal state. However, not every individual is capable of creating this inner certainty and stability. The lack of this ability leads to the intolerance for the external uncertainty.

In his work, “Men’s Search for Meaning”, Victor Frankl describes the psychotherapeutic method, concerning his personal experience of survival in a concentration camp. This method is related to the existential therapy and is based on the fact that the main crisis in human life is associated with the loss of meaning in this life. Conversely, the restoration of mental strength is possible only if one finds meaning in all manifestations of life, even the most tragic and cruel ones. This statement partially reflects our perception of uncertainty. The people in the concentration...
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Camp did not even know if they would survive, and whether it made sense to endure the suffering. Victor Frankl's memoirs tell us that he found a way out of the cruelty around him by creating certainty within himself. He had no idea, whether he would ever live outside the concentration camp. However, he imagined that future, drawing it in his imagination, thus giving his life certainty and meaning (Frankl, 1990).

If the situation of the certainty self-creation is quite obvious, then the facts of accepting uncertainty and adapting to it are a more complicated strategy. The complexity lies in its irrationality and prevalent emotional component. If a person is regarded as uncontrollable, unpredictable and cannot be influenced, it becomes impossible to apply coping strategies related to actions planning.

The facts of accepting uncertainty and adapting to it are examples of emotionally-oriented coping. The main goal is to distance yourself from the stress caused by the state of uncertainty. One way to achieve it is to focus on the positive consequences of the situation. Uncertainty can be seen as a vacuum that is known to attract everything that can fill it. When facing uncertainty, we get the opportunity to find something that has never really had a meaning in our lives. It can be a new experience that contributes to the full development of the individual and his potential. At the same time, our striving for certainty, often leads to stagnation, to the recurrence of past mistakes.

Conclusions of the Research

Although tolerance for uncertainty is a strategy for success, development and prosperity, both types of uncertainty perception – tolerant and intolerant – have an equal right to exist and are variants of the psychological norm. Moreover, the presence of both types in interpersonal relationships and in the society as a whole is a way to ensure equality and a balance of power. While some people strive for innovation and change, others preserve traditions and care for sustainability. The main point is that they should find the way to negotiate with each other. Both sides should develop the skills they lack. An innovator and a lover of change need to learn how to "play by the rules" and follow these rules on the way to success. On the contrary, a conservative stability fighter should sometimes voluntarily immerse himself in the conditions of uncertainty and learn how to act as effectively in such cases, as in the conditions of transparency and certainty.

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В проведенном нами исследовании приняли участие 85 офицеров-слушателей Национального университета обороны Украины имени Ивана Черняховского. Найдено, что исследуемые в ситуации неопределенности, которую в основном порождает сложность ситуации, переживают негативные эмоции и стресс. Среди способов преодоления неопределенности нами выделены два вида копинг-стратегий: проблемно-ориентированный и эмоционально-ориентированный.

Исследованы факторы неопределенности, которые оказывают значительное влияние на принятие решения у командиров, а также основные стратегии поведения для снижения влияния неопределенности при принятии решения.

Выведено, что командиру, который принимает решение в ситуации неопределенности важно развить у себя умение регулировать протекание своих психических состояний. В статье резюмировано, что неопределенность позволяет командиру получить, отыскать и реализовать то решение, которого не было в его жизненном опыте и тем самым раскрыть свой потенциал. В то же время, постоянное стремление к определенности, наоборот, часто приводит к статичности, стагнации, «ожаждению по замкнутому кругу» прошлых ошибок.

**Ключевые слова:** толерантность; интолерантность; неопределенность; принятие решения; командир; копинг-стратегия; сложная ситуация; стресс.
ритмів прийняття управлінських рішень. В семантичній площині толерантність та інтолерантність до невизначеності декодуються авторами як риса особистості, соціально- псіхологічна установка, когнітивно-перцептивне утворення та як потенційне джерело загрози.

Встановлено, що толерантність до невизначеності є множинністю складних реакцій, які мають ситуаційно-специфічну змінну. За такого підходу майбутнє особистості постає як джерело дискомфорту, потенційної небезпеки й викликає почуття страху, тривоги і невпевненості. Особистість з високим рівнем толерантності до невизначеності, – навпаки сприймає майбутнє як можливість отримати новий досвід.

В проведеному нами дослідженні прийняли участь 85 офіцерів-слухачів Національного університету оборони України імені Івана Черняховського. Знайдено, що досліджувані в ситуації невизначеності, яку в основному породжує складність ситуації, переживають негативні емоції та стрес. Серед способів подолання невизначеності нами виниклли два види копінг-стратегії: проблемно-орієнтований та емоційно-орієнтований.

Досліджено чинники невизначеності, які мають значний вплив на прийняття рішення командиром, а також основні стратегії поведінки задля зниження впливу невизначеності при прийнятті рішення.

Виявлено, що командиру, який приймає рішення в ситуації невизначеності важливо розвивати в собі вміння регулювати протікання своїх психічних станів. В статті резюмовано, що невизначеність дає змогу командиру отримати, відшукувати й реалізувати те рішення, якого не було в його життєвому досвіді й тим самим розкрити свій потенціал. В той же час, постійне прагнення до визначеності, навпаки, часто призводить до статичності, стагнації, «ходіння по замкнутому колу» минулених помилок.

Ключові слова: толерантність; інтолерантність; невизначеність; прийняття рішення; командир; копінг-стратегія; складна ситуація, стрес.