Paper for Sub-theme 8: Defence Management and Economics

Author Ville Nokipii (ville.nokipii@mil.fi) and Co-author Sari Uusipaavalniemi

Anticipating Host Nation Support Logistics in 2040 from the perspective of the Finnish Defence Forces

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline how we can anticipate logistics futures in the military context in particular. The phenomenon under study is Host Nation Support from the perspective of the Finnish Defence Forces (FDF). Logistics forms the core of Host Nation Support. In this vein, an important goal is to clarify the significance of anticipating futures as a part of logistics capabilities development in the FDF.

The research problem and research gap

The research gap stems from the lack of information on how logistics will develop by 2040 and, more importantly, how this will affect HNS capabilities in Finland. There are numerous open access articles and research papers dedicated to trends that influence logistics development in the business environment, both nationally and internationally. The challenge lies in the fact that there are very few evidence-based analyses of military organizations available. Military analysis documents may contain sensitive information, which restricts the opportunities for open discussion. However, there is a need for scientific discussion on the anticipation methods and theoretical thinking in the field of military sciences.

The most challenging part of HNS logistics relates to developing the process in the long term. It is impossible to anticipate the future environments and the evolving nature of military operations with a high degree of accuracy. But it is perfectly viable for us to identify possible development paths and signals that may either strengthen or undermine the development. To achieve this, we must improve our capabilities to foresee and anticipate by means of futures studies methods and anticipation skills. This research gap gives rise to the research question that this paper seeks to address: *How can we anticipate the futures of logistics in the context of Host Nation Support in the Finnish Defence Forces in 2040*?

The basic design of the study

The paper is based on a structured literature review of the latest scientific publications on futures research and the respective theories, complemented with an overview of logistics trend research. Unclassified NATO publications and Finnish Defence Forces publications were also reviewed in relation to the theme of HNS.

A qualitative research approach was adopted due to the emerging and evolving nature of the research topic. Content analysis was conducted with strict parameters set by the chosen keywords: *logistics, military logistics, sustainment, supply chain management, host nation support and HNS.*

Major findings

Based on the prior literature and publications on futures studies, there are multiple ways to foresee and anticipate. Some of these overlap and may demonstrate few differences in their philosophy of science (Miller, 2018). The methodology adopted in modern futures studies is highly versatile and multipurpose. Examples of futures studies models that may support anticipation are *Weak Signals in Organizational Futures Learning* (Hiltunen 2010), *Futures Map* (Kuusi, Cuhls & Steinmüller, 2015), *Foresight Competency* (Hines, Gary, Daheim & van der Laan, 2017), *Futures Literacy* (Miller, 2018) and *The Five Dimensions of Futures Consciousness* (Ahvenharju, Minkkinen & Lalot, 2018).

The logistics and supply chain futures studies mainly focus on identifying trends and the most likely development paths. Thus far, very little attention has been paid to weak signals, discontinuities, or unlikely but possible development paths. There is also room for drawing more detailed defence implications and conducting an impact analysis in the military environment, especially in logistics. The Futures Map particularly applies to anticipation in the military logistics context.

A summary of interpretations and conclusions

The research question posed in this paper was *how can we anticipate the futures of logistics in the context of Host Nation Support in the Finnish Defence Forces in 2040*? In order to provide a direct answer to this question, it is possible to apply multiple futures studies methods with their relevant theories to anticipate the future of HNS logistics from the perspective of the FDF. Futures studies would also pave the way for logistics development research.

Among the main findings, it would appear that it is possible to choose a certain futures research method and run with it. On the other hand, possible approaches include operating environment analyses, building anticipation competence, exploring logistics trends, and developing anticipation theories. Every action connected with these approaches would improve anticipation skills and provide more information about the future (Motti & Masoumi, 2016).

The relevance of work for the specific audience and wider community of practice

Military organizations should put more emphasis on developing the anticipation capability in logistics, covering developments in both business and military logistics (Hagman, 2013). Enhanced anticipation capability would make it easier to estimate the required support, for example, subsequently making it more efficient to plan and execute logistics.

With this paper, we hope to generate discussion around the theme of HNS logistics and anticipation. Anticipating HNS logistics in 2040 from the perspective of the Finnish Defence Forces can be seen as an interdisciplinary subject. Researching HNS logistics futures calls for an approach that takes account of military studies and futures studies methods at least.

References

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