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**A CRITICAL RESEARCH ON LEADER DEVELOPMENT AND
MILITARY LEADERSHIP**

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Abstract:

Military leadership, which can be defined as the process of affecting people to accomplish the missions by providing motivation, purpose, and direction, is a highly essential subject in modern military organizations. Although it has previously been studied in terms of leadership development, policy and guiding principles, leader attributes and traits as well as adverse situations and environments, recent developments especially in the fields of AI (artificial intelligence) technologies have necessitated more comprehensive research. Therefore, the training adapted to the classical definitions cannot provide the necessary background for developing leadership in future wars for future soldiers. Concordantly, the aim of this paper is to critically examine the definitions of military leadership in line with recent developments and try to outline a broad perspective on the subject matter.

Keywords: Future Wars; Future Soldiers; Leadership; Military Leadership; Strategic Leadership.

1. Introduction

Military leadership can be defined as the process of leading others to accomplish a mission by providing direction, motivation and purpose. The basic responsibilities of military leaders include the welfare of the soldiers while accomplishing a specific mission. A military leader is supposed to perform specified, directed and implied duties and his/her fundamental leadership power relies on the chain of command. However, upon the rapid technological developments, the operational environment, the types of threats as well as management techniques have undergone a major transformation.

While the contemporary operational environment presents multiple challenges and opportunities, recent developments especially in the fields of AI technologies have necessitated embracing multiple orientations of different leadership styles. Therefore, the training adapted to the classical definitions cannot provide the necessary background for developing leadership in future wars for future soldiers. Concordantly, the aim of this paper is to critically examine the definitions of military leadership in line with recent developments and try to outline a broad perspective on the subject matter.

2. Military Leadership Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities

Leadership is a constantly evolving phenomenon embedded within an organization. It is affected by the delegation of authorities and works as well as the organizational culture and structure. While new approaches for improving leadership competencies have been investigated throughout the years, the main concern of human resources directors is reported as identifying leaders and improving leadership in a recent study [1]. Since the significance of developing



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leadership competencies is globally recognized [2], programs for building competencies have still been developed to increase efficacy [3].

On the other hand, as a theoretical and practical discipline, military leadership requires a consistent and continuous long-term approach to develop leadership competencies that are discernible from civilian leadership [4]. Besides, military leadership incorporates unique context-based elements in addition to generic ones [5]. The main context which shapes and makes the military leadership discernible from civilian leadership is maintaining security as the core task. That main context also involves danger and potential physical, material, or psychological harm to members of the organization. Therefore, organization members are allowed to use force if necessary [5].

The security and combat task also present multiple unique characteristics that shape military leadership and reveal distinctive challenges. First of all, “totality” is the fundamental characteristic of the military organizations in which almost every aspect is controlled within the lives of its members. Accordingly, the dependency on the leader is greater compared to other institutions. Secondly, the formal institutional structure necessitates a formal chain of command through organized professionals. Not surprisingly, the power of the commander largely relies on his/her rank based upon a defined hierarchy which also shapes his/her leadership practices. Thirdly, each and every decision and command directly affect a large number of subordinates due to the size of the organization. Therefore, military leaders confront unique challenges and tribulations while making crucial and difficult decisions. Concordantly, improving military leadership necessitates a comprehensive study in which the contemporary operational environment affected by the significant technological, social and cultural changes is taken into consideration [6]. Especially the end of the Cold War initiated a major transformation within the strategic military reality; with armies being forced to overcome amorphous, frequently evolving different threats. Thus, military organizations have been challenged by technological developments, dynamic geopolitical realities, changes in military leadership practices, and the transformation of the military career [7];[8].

3.Improving and Implementing Strategic Leadership

As a result of being a large, total, and hierarchical institution with a specific structure and orders operating within a fast-changing, complex social and cultural environment, modern military organizations employ different leadership styles. Besides, these different leadership styles may contradict each other. In light of the aforementioned challenges and dynamic environments, a wide array of leadership abilities are discussed to ensure that commanders can deal with conflicting demands caused by the complex environment. That’s why several commander training programs have focused on developing, improving, and implementing a distinctive leadership that can cope with paradoxes revealed by the complexities. In a recent study, these paradoxes are introduced as the following:

- “(a) Shared leadership versus hierarchical leadership,*
- (b) flexibility and creativity versus conformity and discipline,*
- (c) complexity and chaos versus simplicity and linearity,*
- (d) hegemonic and prototypical leadership versus leadership of multiple identities*
(with regards to gender and other peripheral situated identities),
- (e) distant leadership and exchange relationship versus intimate leadership and*



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communal relationship.” [5].

Transformations in the battlefield, force design, mission execution as well as joint and combined operations have also transformed military leaders and enabled them to understand strategic implications earlier. Accordingly, developing tactical leaders and directing them into strategic leaders as well as empowering them in the right manner cannot be achieved by using a set of classical leader competencies. Although hierarchical organizational culture presents many challenges that hinder the development of strategic leadership, the paradox literature offers new points of view to overcoming these obstacles [9]. Recent studies suggest paradoxical-hybrid frames which simultaneously exist at different temporal and spatial contexts for effective military leadership especially operating at strategic levels [10]; [11].

4. Conclusion

It is an obvious fact that classical leadership methods such as autocratic leadership are no longer sufficient while coping with the contemporary operational environment and commanders are required to foster competing demands in order to adapt to the rapidly changing military environment. Developing future leaders capable of strategic leadership may become possible as long as accepting a major shift to skill development supported by adaptive educational patterns in addition to the experience gained by specific career patterns. In this process, rather than teaching perishable skills, it is essential to develop enduring competencies and the ability to foster competing demands. Enduring competencies involve ensuring flexibility and efficiency, supporting individuality and teamwork, balancing creativity and discipline, promoting utility and novelty, enabling members to exercise their limits while performing social responsibility and retaining their well-being.

Future wars will be dominated by advanced AI technology and practices. Therefore, in order to adapt to these developments, future soldiers are supposed to develop a strategic leadership approach much earlier in their career paths. Contingency Theory becomes useful for providing an adaptive framework to support military leaders in this chaotic and complex environment typified by asymmetrical threats and technological developments. It is concluded that competence management based on Contingency approach has become essential to develop future military leaders.

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