

## LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEMPORARY MILITARY: MAVERICKS IN THE BUREAUCRACY?

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**ABSTRACT** In this reflective paper, we study the tension between leadership and institutional control in contemporary Western military organizations. More precisely, we focus on two (out of five) NATO measures of merit, namely the Measure of Performance (MOP) and the Measure of Effectiveness (MOE), and how they manifest this tension at the operational level. We suggest that fixed leadership roles are not enough – what is required instead is an adaptive, pragmatic and even rebellious attitude towards the military bureaucracy in the contemporary, ever-changing conflict landscape.

### Introduction

Military organizations are distinct from other types of organizations due to the content of their operations, as well as their methodology of using force (Lang 1965). Some scholars emphasise the separation of the military from broader society, as well as the difficulties involved in gaining access to relevant data and publishing research findings (Soeters et al. 2014). In this reflective paper, we assess the relationship (and conflict) between two institutionalised measures of merit and operational leaders in

Western military organizations. One of the authors of this paper spent six months participating in an ISAF mission in Regional Command North HQ in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan in 2013 and 2014. This experience of daily work as a colonel in the military headquarters resonated with Peter Drucker's well-known insight: Leadership in an organization entails 'doing the right things', whereas management concerns itself with 'doing things right' (see, for instance, Drucker 2008). In this paper, our interest lies in the administrative culture of contemporary Western military organizations and how leadership is manifested at the operational level.

In the context of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), two measures are used above all in evaluating the performance of any system: the Measure of Performance (MOP) and the Measure of Effectiveness (MOE). These two concepts from the operational planning process are – we argue – the most important measures of successful mission execution (Research and Technology Organization 2005).<sup>1</sup> The aim of this paper is to discuss the *de facto* leadership culture of Western military organizations. We achieve this by presenting a critical examination of NATO measures of merit in the light of contemporary leadership theories and practice. By juxtaposing leadership literature, NATO manuals and practical experience gained in the field, we identify and shed light on how the commanding officer stretches or even bypasses the official protocol in achieving the objectives, and how well the organization methodically follows the orders set by the management. In other words, the process manual is often in open conflict with how things are done in practice. Moreover, we discuss the fact that, at times, operational leaders have to work in a so-called 'grey' area in bypassing the publicly negotiated, official mandate that trickles down from the political process of national-level leadership. In the

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<sup>1</sup> NATO measures of merit form a hierarchy of five measures. In this paper, we focus on MOP and MOE only.

process, we address a series of questions relating to the legitimacy and desirability of leadership practices in military institutions, as well as the way in which these organizations are able to accommodate these ‘maverick’ leaders.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we review leadership theories in general, as well as the leadership/institutional tension in the military context. Second, we assess how this tension is manifested in the context of contemporary, open societies. Third, we discuss fixed leadership practices in a highly institutionalised military context, focussing on the contemporary conflict landscape. The paper concludes with a call for a more pragmatic or adaptive form of military leadership.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Leadership studies**

Plutarch (1st century) was one of the first narrators of the lives and deeds of the ‘great men’ of antiquity, initiating a genre that combined the (auto)biographies of leaders, general history and fiction. As interest in social phenomena started to emerge after the Enlightenment (and as severe social problems started to emerge in the aftermath of industrialisation), Thomas Carlyle articulated his understanding of leadership with his Great Man theory (1841) – an understanding of charismatic, visionary and skilled individuals that shape the destinies of their societies. Max Weber, in turn, is often considered to have initiated the leadership theorising vis-à-vis the sociology of organizations (1947) with his view of charisma as mirroring the qualities of the society in question (Islam 2009). Weber’s work could also be seen as an attempt to ‘save’ organizations from powerful and aspiring charismatics. Since then, Weber’s articulation has been acknowledged as providing a broader framework for understanding charismatic leadership (Jones 2001), supplemented by behavioural views (Conger and Kanungo, 1987), as well as those pertaining to the ‘need’ for

leadership (De Vries et al. 2002), among others.

Classical views and their developments were not unanimously accepted, however. Herbert Spencer was an early critic of Carlyle, noting that “[t]hose who regard the histories of societies as the histories of their great men...overlook the truth that such great men are the products of their societies” (1891: 268). Further, mainstream, modern leadership theories were criticised for being one-sidedly romanticised and ‘heroic’ in nature as early as the 1980s by Meindl and colleagues (1985). According to the ‘romance’ view of leadership (for a review of this genre, see Bligh et al. 2011), the successes and hardships of organizations are oversimplified and (wrongly) explained solely through the performance or behavioural traits of their leaders. Moreover, the orthodoxy of leadership as the defining factor of an organization was challenged (Gronn 2003), along with the inherent conceptual difficulties ingrained in charismatic and transformational leadership (Yukl 1999). Leadership was also criticised as being an ‘alienating social myth’ (Gemmill and Oakley 1992), a regressive wish to disregard one’s consciousness and responsibility within an organization. It should be noted, however, that despite all the criticism, notions of the charismatic leader prevail in the leadership discourse – both popular and academic. It seems that ‘charisma’ belongs to the definitional conceptual landscape of Western culture. In a sense, the contextual view of leadership (Fairhurst 2009; Ladkin 2011) is aimed at understanding the structuring of this leadership landscape. According to this view, leadership has to be firmly understood in the context of a leader’s followers, as leadership does not exist detached from its context. In its simplest form, this view is merely an acknowledgement that local, cultural and historical factors *do* make a difference – challenging the old view emphasising the behaviour of the particular leader.

Contemporary research is looking for a new disposition to adopt towards understanding leadership, and has arrived at a discursive

reading of heroism. Unsurprisingly – and despite the increased attention to the context of leadership – post-heroism has its share of problems. For instance, Keith Grint has drawn attention to the sacred nature of leadership (2010) – viewing it as an enabler, in a sense an essential ingredient in the social construction of leadership – rather than to the demise of effective leadership. Nevertheless, naïve post-heroism is in evidence in the popular accounts of leadership. Leader archetypes continue to shape their followers’ understanding of the world and the social formation, as well as themselves within those spheres (Alvesson and Spicer 2011; Hatch et al. 2005; Keegan 1988; Kuronen and Virtaharju 2015), despite the outspoken, conceptual (and academic) criticisms. It could be argued that a productive relationship with these different leader archetypes would mean diluting their ontological correspondence in the strictest sense of the analogy. These archetypes might be treated as cultural, epistemic accounts that aim at articulating the nature or functioning of a particular leader in a given cultural and historical context. In a sense, these leader archetypes constitute an extension of the contextual view of leadership. However, even if we assume that the contextual view of leadership is ‘right’, the open question remains: why, despite all of our enlightenment, intellect and moral righteousness, do symbolic displays of leadership inspire such a multitude of people? Assuming there is one, what is the ‘magic ingredient’ in heroism that appeals to something ‘deep’ inside human beings (for a classic treatment of totalitarianism, see Reich 1970)?

### **The context: Leadership-institutional tension in the military**

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) implements ‘the Effects-Based Approach to Operations’ in Afghanistan in an effort to measure performance on a wide range of issues (see Rietjens et al. 2011: 329–338 for further details). In their treatment, the authors highlight two streams of leadership – ‘intuition-driven’ and ‘assessment-driven’. Alternatively, the NATO handbook

(Research and Technology Organization 2005) defines five Measures of Merit (MOM) in the following manner:

- 1) Dimensional Parameters (DP): the properties or characteristics inherent in the physical systems or force elements.
- 2) Measures of Performance (MOP): measure how well a system or force element accomplishes a defined task. It is assessed by the combination of Dimensional Parameters in an appropriate model.
- 3) Measures of Effectiveness (MOE): measure how well systems or force elements accomplish their assigned tasks within an operational context.
- 4) Measures of Force Effectiveness (MOFE): measure the degree to which a force meets its objectives. In this context a force may be any organization or group of organizations, civilian or military, generally under coherent direction.
- 5) Measures of Policy Effectiveness (MOPE): measure how well the overall objectives of the mandating authority are achieved.

Here, we will focus on how a system or force element accomplishes its defined tasks within an operational context. The idea is that the assigned task of a force becomes reality through a context; in other words, MOP becomes through MOE. In this paper, MOP is the key metric of military leadership, whereas MOE is the area of the managerial process associated with the mid- and higher- level goals and objectives of the whole military-political campaign. Naturally, leadership is connected to management and vice versa (see for example Gill 2012: 6–8, among many others). It should also be noted that both leadership and management could be found in all five MOMs. For the purposes of this essay, however, decision-making and execution of the political mandate are reduced to the relationship between MOP and MOE. This is the crucial relationship whereby the field reality of the military

operation is connected to the system of control. DPs are the single target or a part of the military-weaponry systems, while MOFEs and MOPEs are the higher-level abstractions of MOE. DPs and MOPs are closely aligned with the physical and human environment of the battlespace, whereas MOEs, MOFEs and MOPEs are structured to support the conceptual (mind and time) dimension of the campaign design. The political-military campaign formulation and implementation are complex interactive processes in which politics, values and organizational cultures and management styles determine or constrain decisions at the higher levels. Leaders have to form judgements on various unfamiliar and difficult issues while factoring in technologies, limited resources, societal attitudes, cultural differences, government regulations and environmental risk issues. As in any strategy process, they form judgements on organizational structures, systems, staff, and bureaucracies (for the strategy process in general, see Lampel et al. 2013).

Here, we focus on two measures in particular, MOP and MOE. As evaluative criteria in the military context, both are associated with the cohesion of leadership. At the operational level, MOE is essential, as the politically-laden execution has to follow the strict rules of engagement, international agreements and a variety of other norms. At the higher level, MOE often reduces and frames how the sublevel leaders may fulfil their MOP. Thus, in the contemporary military context, normative measures represent a way of understanding and communicating the manner in which the organization is running its institutionalised set of practices. Christopher Coker understands war as a three-fold concept: it is simultaneously an instrumental (rational states forcing their will upon others), existential (warriors need it to affirm their humanity) and metaphysical (sacrifice – death with meaning) concept (Coker 2004: 6). With respect to the leadership literature outlined above, MOP could be seen as the measure that has historically been associated with leaders and leadership. Moreover, we could

perceive the talk of ‘charismatic leadership’ as the first step away from the assumption that leadership inevitably has *everything* to do with the individual leader. In this light, understanding organizations may be seen as a modernist-rationalist reaction to the pre-modern and irrational cult of ‘great men’, embraced by the primitive people of the past – a project of technologized enlightenment of the societies emerging from the horrors of two world wars. With respect to military organizations, it should be kept in mind that the ideology of bureaucratic control has trickled down from above to military organizations, which are reflections of the corresponding societies they serve. Within these organizations, there is an inherent tension between a culture that endorses heroism and the explicit professional metrics that emphasise control.

Dichotomising MOP and MOE further, we could argue that strong and visible commanders are typically represented as the embodiments of the leadership aspect of the matter (MOP), whereas their headquarters play the management role in the operations, engaging in planning, mission execution and control (MOE). From the perspective of deeper emotions, the commander is a metaphor of the agentic, organizational will – while the HQ illustrates the will to realise given directions (obedience). This dichotomy is accentuated in battle situations in which (depending on time and/or changes in the battle) there is often no time to manage the bureaucratic dimension, with leadership being the only solution. How the HQ works largely depends on the commander’s individual way of using the information it provides. For instance, if the commander is very well aware of the details in the field, the HQ has more time to concentrate on the fulfilment of MOE. If the commander is inexperienced and unaware of the field details, the HQ has to provide much more support. The temporal aspect is also an issue here, as the threat often intensifies over time. Taking risks may result in considerable successes or losses on the



battlefield, but in the highly institutionalised contemporary military context, the commander risks their future career even after a successful operation, if things are not done ‘by the book’ (Coker 2002).

From a cultural perspective, armies are reflections of the societies from which they are drawn (Condell and Zabecki 2008: 6–8). The study of WWII propaganda has established that “...most men are members of the larger society by virtue of identifications which are mediated through the human beings with whom they are in personal relationships” (Shils and Janowitz 1948: 315). In the context of historical military thinking, this is significant for the functioning of military systems. In fact, the greater cultural framework shapes the organizational level in general: social order is sustained by “...at least partial consensus about how things are to be perceived and the meanings for which they stand” (Hatch, 1997: 42). For instance, we see that the nationalist-romanticist tradition of German culture is apparent in the German military. A classic German account of the Second World War combat philosophy is based on so-called *Truppenführung* (unit command), according to which war is “...an art, a free and creative activity founded on scientific principles. It makes the very highest demands on the human personality”. In the chaos of war, incalculable elements may often have a decisive influence on victory or defeat. According to this line of reasoning, the German approach to war emphasised the importance of the battle (or mission). At this operational level (which was rather small-scale considering the totality of the world wars), *Auftragstaktik* (mission command) was based on the idea of strong relationships between the military unit and its commander. These relations would be of the utmost importance in training and controlling the armies successfully.

Even today in the contemporary NATO organization, a commander can tell their subordinates *what* to do and *when* to do it

through individual agency (MOP), but not necessarily tell them *how* to do it (MOE). This is possible only if the leader can understand *why* the unit has this kind of task. The unit leaders can be seen more as coaches and teachers than pure commanders – at least their contemporary mode of communication is far from the historical understanding of ‘command’. As the WWII field manual suggests, they must live with their troops and share their dangers and deprivations, their joys and sorrows. Only then can they acquire first-hand knowledge of the combat capabilities and needs of their soldiers (Condell and Zabecki 2008: 4–5).

Keith Grint has pointed to the potential detriment of concentrating on combat amidst large-scale military campaigns (“The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing” writes Berlin 2013: 1; Grint 2014 continues from this metaphor). For Grint, the ‘cult of combat’ was one of the determining factors that contributed to Germany’s eventual defeat in the Second World War. Using Archilochus’ classic metaphor of the hedgehog and the fox, he argues that the Allied ‘fox’ was able to defeat the German ‘hedgehog’ thanks to wider attention to, and understanding of, the situation and other contextual determining factors. The fact that the hedgehog was rarely defeated on the battlefield did not prevent the Germans from losing the totality of the war.

In our contemporary times, the media-fed Western populations (and politicians) rarely have personal experiences of war. Despite this, politicians wish to control the military more closely in order to avoid ‘collateral damage’ (*Collateral murder* 2010). Global information networks enable the real-time participation of a vast number of people, thus rendering institutional leaders incapable of controlling information as effectively as in the past. Today, it also seems that the charisma of an active leader is not enough to build trust if the facts and figures are not in line with the opinion shared by the general public. It seems that the Western political discourse

has been taken over by the sensibility of administration, which does not evoke the emotional register of the general population. We are left with the question of *why* the bureaucratic side of normative measures is prioritised in assessing the institutional state of affairs. Why is initiative-seeking leadership often socially punished – to the extent of actively avoiding notable leadership acts in military organizations?

### **The x-ray of openness in contemporary Western societies**

The military context in general, and the battlefield in particular, is where the tension between leadership and bureaucratic control comes to light. It is also close to the fundamental conflict between civil societies and the military – a good example being the ongoing controversy over secret detainment facilities and interrogation methods used by the United States in their ‘War on Terror’. The role of the media is also significant – the general audience prefers to see the military organization in action using minimal kinetic power and solving the conflict swiftly with minimal casualties. The prolonged suffering of innocent people in the conflict area cannot be condoned – no matter how charismatic and skilful the leader might be (Munro 2005). Once again, the amount of available time the commander has – or feels that they have – becomes relevant. The one who takes ‘the lead’ is also the one who shapes any given situation. Obtaining, maintaining and utilising the initiative over the enemy are in the interests of any commander. As there is often little or no time to play ‘by the book’ in live situations, military organizations might be unable or unwilling to play by the rules established by the civil society. Thus, timing is an important factor in the engagement process. Soldiers aim to play by the rules of combat, which can also lead to problems in the ‘new’ conflict landscape, where non-state and hybrid operatives are common and may or may not abide by the same rules.

From the operational perspective, the tragedy often unfolds when either a leadership initiative or a management process assumes too

strong a role (or their respective evaluation processes vis-à-vis the whole system are flawed). Sometimes the impatient commander feels as if there is no time to wait for HQ to develop and execute the plans and procedures 'by the book', or the unit is not yet equipped and trained. Another pitfall based on the commander's lack of competence is the use of 'mission-type' leadership and an attempt to micro-manage and control all the details, using the latest technological solutions. In fact, evidence from air force pilots suggests that errors are manifested in unexpected events but nevertheless are embedded in habitual behaviour and learned-by-heart chains of action (Catino and Patriotta 2013). In other words, outlier occurrences expose the inherent flaws in the process. This gives rise to an overt conflict between the pragmatic leading of changing situations and adherence to the procedure manual. How are members of the organization able to evaluate what to do if institutionalised requirements contribute to potentially detrimental ends?

From the perspective of leader emotions, the commander is tempted to trust the likeminded, emotionally committed officers in HQ that support his or her leadership. This often means that the rest of HQ becomes marginalised by this new sub-organization and the adherent organizational processes. Typically, when an ineffective organization or institution has not been under firm leadership and faces an urgent need to act, the new commander may be in a position to assume power without much information about the real reasons for the inefficiency. He or she has no time to investigate the challenges of the management process and, more often than not, the result will be of a temporary nature only, leaving the leadership performance muted. This leads us to an understanding that the art of leading is based on a balance between efficiency and performance – achieving much while using only a certain amount of organizational resources. The successful commander has understood the pragmatic dimension of his

actions by combining his creative action with the processual execution of orders from HQ.

### **Fixed roles of leadership in the changing conflict landscape**

This brings us to military leadership roles. In his book *The Mask of Command* (1988), John Keegan analyses different commanders and their leadership styles. For him, being a general is much more than commanding armies in the field. Keegan argues that the idealised roles of a commander of a military institution include that of king, priest, diplomat, thinker or doer, and that the leader may be an intellectual rather than an executive. Viewed in this light, it is rather strange that the general audience seems to view the military organization as a stereotype of a tightly managed institution. Studying military history reveals that in addition to a plurality of roles and identities, the general often has a dual role, emerging both as a symbol of the society that sends its youth into battle, as well as a guiding father figure. A vigilant leader builds a strong bond between the whole society and their organization, creating a mindset that motivates soldiers to follow them into war.

The commander, however, bears the ultimate and absolute responsibility for the outcomes of using power through immediate violence – a situation that favours a pragmatic stance towards operating procedures (and, in fact, in the event of an *ad post facto* inquiry, an assessment of conduct is made with reference to the procedure manual). In a sense, it is also a form of accountability, albeit a much more categorical one than in other organizational contexts. It seems unlikely that people would take on responsibilities over which they have limited personal influence. The ‘iron cage’ of institutional control has the potential to cause backlashes: rebellion within the organization need not necessarily be visible. It may appear in the guise of ‘doing things right’, yet in a completely different way from that which the creators of the orders ever imagined. Departures from the code of conduct are many, sometimes visible and often deeply influencing all aspects of

the crisis landscape. The potential for such departures should duly be taken seriously, and addressed by means other than merely increasing institutional procedures.

Echoing Weber, the tension between the administrative process and leadership renders both more apparent. In a way, performing leadership in a 'live' situation reveals an anarchic tendency – a will to challenge the status quo. From this perspective, successful military leaders have to be somewhat anarchistic by nature, while taking the organizational culture and praxis into account. However, it appears that a minority are willing to increase their stress level and put their career on the line by behaving thusly. Such a leader needs to be a *rebel*; someone able and willing to challenge the norm. A recent neuropsychological personality study suggests that extraversion, openness and low agreeableness were typical predictors of 'maverick' individuals. Defined as individuals that "engage in creative, dynamic, risk-taking, disruptive, and bold goal-directed behaviours" (Gardiner and Jackson 2012: 498), mavericks appear to be less neurotic and consistently risk-seeking, even when facing hardships. As consistent and self-assured right-brainers (this brain hemisphere dominance predicts creativity), their creativity is not hampered by difficulties. Moreover, as it seems to be a combination of both biological and social contributors, the issue of maverick leadership becomes a question of choosing the right people and socialising them accordingly through education.

Oddly, the value of taking responsibility (or challenging norms, for that matter) seems to be disappearing from Western societies. This resonates with how Western societies value their leaders more through the register of normative institutions than through ethical considerations – an echo of the diminishing importance of religion in the West. The 'lack of feeling' is also witnessed in the way in which Western audiences in particular prefer video-game-like, rapid, 'surgical' operations that do not cause casualties on their

own side. This serves to play down the significance of military organizations developing information and ‘cyber’ capabilities. Using non-kinetic influence against the adversary is called for in order to avoid the real face of brutal warfare, as exemplified in the spectacle of the Gulf War when TV audiences worldwide saw the combat between Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi military units and the Allied Forces, while Saddam remained in power (Munro, 2005).

Despite leadership’s major role in military education, contemporary warfare is a highly institutionalised social practice. Unintuitively, taking lives is the outcome of combining careful military management and leadership; war needs to be followed through an institutionalised, administrative process. Before soldiers can kill, both management processes and leadership initiatives have to be aligned well with the shared understanding of the society in question. Historically speaking, there have been many models of warfare (Huhtinen 2012). Ideally, for a military organization, this means that *both* the organizational processes (institutions, structure, management) *and* the leadership are superior compared to those of the enemy. At times, the rational and normative (management) nature of warfare (embodied by Hector of Troy) is emphasised, while at other times the intuitive, subconscious-emotional and leadership nature of warfare comes to the fore (exemplified by the Greek hero, Achilles) (Coker 2002). We argue that MOE is the rational process by which the battle is weighed up and controlled, whereas MOP draws more on the narrative and qualitative aspects of evaluating the command performance in combat.

In the contemporary conflict landscape, there are two new dimensions to war – the rise of insurgencies and the Internet. Cyberspace, private security companies, non-governmental organizations as well as the general public have all assumed focal roles in recent military conflicts (Caforio 2013: 9). Consider, for instance, the developments in Ukraine in early 2014. The manner in which Western military organizations are prepared to act

revolves around them being committed to the minimum use of force, and seeking sustainable international relations rather than decisive military victory. These objectives are displayed in the primacy of MOE in the Western military organizations. Risk-seeking, individual effort (MOP) has a minor role in contemporary warfare, as insurgents, motorcycle gangs, or operatives of ideological NGOs do not wear military uniforms, but mingle among the civilian population.

### **The outcome-oriented rebellion**

US General Martin Dempsey recently commented on the new leadership and operational doctrine by stating that: “the recent release of FM 5-0, *The Operations Process*, represents a major shift in how we develop adaptive leaders...who do not think linearly, but who instead seek to understand the complexity of problems before seeking to solve them...” (Cojocar 2011: 13). Here, as in other contexts, the rise of MOE is clearly visible – the process tends to dominate the individual initiative of the commander, felt in the call for ‘adaptive’ leadership. Alternatively, this could be described as ‘pragmatic’ (Mumford and Van Doorn 2001), ‘instrumental’ (Antonakis and House 2014) or, once again, ‘maverick’ leadership (Gardiner and Jackson 2012), the first two having been explicitly associated with each other (Anderson and Sun 2015). Regardless of the exact wording of the concept, the call is for something *which commanders would adapt to the situation in the field, keeping the processual frameworks in mind (MOE), but actively engaging in creative and agentic leadership acts*. This is closely associated with the idea of ‘mission-type’ orders. Today, especially in security organizations, the main aim is not only to avoid risk and minimise threats, but also to exert efforts if and when the risk becomes a reality.

This is also a question of understanding the nature of the organization. It is not only a thing or an entity, but also the repetitive activity of ordering and patterning itself (Chia 1999).



This is also the idea of ‘mission-type’ orders in command and control systems in military organizations, demonstrated in the use of ‘task-forces’ (sub-organizations separate from the organization proper that serve a purpose in a particular time and space). The way to understand organization is to relax – without intervention, orchestration, deeply entrenched organizational and institutional habits and routines – and keep organizing together and allow change to occur. In the modern era, military organizations that are based on networks or meshworks (where there is no organization or rationality per se) have to be adaptive and agile in the context of continuous change in the environment. The contemporary military tries to see the environment as continuously surprising, thus raising cross-level awareness. Culture, however, is grounded in practice, and therefore has to include a dynamic aspect. Static military organizations will find themselves in severe difficulties when they come up against the complexities of contemporary crises.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Leadership is not only about visions, missions and cutting deals; is it also about knowing which vision to project because of domain-relevant knowledge on the organization and its environment, how to implement the vision, and how to show followers the path to the goal by providing resources and monitoring outcomes in a constructive way. (Antonakis and House 2014: 765)

Consistent with the views expressed by the writers above, we argue that situational and emotionally sensitive leadership that is well aligned with institutional control brings about adaptive, pragmatic and even productively anarchistic leadership acts. By virtue of acquiring an understanding of the cultural environment and other situational factors, leaders may overcome the ‘iron cage’ of institutional control. The military is a special leadership context,

especially in terms of the leadership style employed. It should not conflict with the general society too much – despite the fact that civil and military societies are often considerably far removed from each other. At the same time, however, we have to accept that in violent situations such as combat, there has to be space for traditional and even mythological styles of leadership that leave room for creative manoeuvring when necessary. In a live situation the ultimate responsibility is always shouldered by the field commander. At the political and national level, the actions should reflect the international norms. This remains a challenge, as ethical norms are only applied to relatively weak actors. Despite public outrage and protest, the most significant war criminals of the contemporary age have evaded prosecution.

Most military commanders have adopted and developed their personal identities and lifestyles through personal and professional growth in academic military cultures, which have placed a strong emphasis on charisma. However, most of the daily routines of contemporary military commanders revolve around the rules of engagement, a strong media presence and the micro-management of the political leadership. It is, therefore, increasingly difficult to demonstrate MOP in a classical, charismatic way at the operational level. More importantly, MOE is the dimension that trickles down from the political-economic level. The professional officer has experienced a shift from warrior to administrative soldier – along with the domination of MOE over MOP. Things were different in the past when a leader like Admiral Nelson, for example, could practice double standards by requiring absolute adherence to regulations from his subordinates, while breaking every rule himself (Grint 2005: 27). The culture of constant measuring is an issue in other fields as well, a prime example being the preoccupation that universities currently have with international journal rankings (Craig et al. 2014). Over-bureaucratisation overlooks the view that human beings have evolved to adhere to the level of energy of their leaders and resonate positively with the

appearance of sureness and signs of strength on a deeper, emotional level (Collins 2004).

It is probable that the logic of administration becomes impotent in the face of strong, charismatic leadership that has the resources it needs to further its objectives. At the national, strategic level, charismatic departures from the norm are rarely punished, providing that the perpetrator is the leader of a strong enough country. How about at the level of military operations? Should military organizations revert to the use of charismatic leaders and play down the role of the administration? NATO has evolved in conjunction with the socio-political development of its member states, as evidenced in its bureaucratic operating procedures. Thus it seems that a new set of rules might need to be established. So how can this be achieved in practice – without violating the norms of the respective member states? Western countries have not gained leaders whose presence has been clearly and visibly displayed during recent decades, as they seem to be symptomatic of an authoritarian leadership culture. Cultures that are based on ‘soft’ values do not easily produce ‘hard’ leadership. Authoritarian leadership is at odds with Western, post-modern societies that emphasise values such as individuality, minority rights and environmentalism. In such circumstances, military displays of power are easily associated with authoritarian regimes and outright fascism.

In this sense, Western democracies are less vulnerable to the influence of pre-modern, charismatic leadership. The same leadership attributes do not apply irrespective of the context in which the leader operates. For instance, vast military parades are rare in most European countries, whereas showcasing one’s military strength is traditional in Russia. Intriguingly, post-modernists declared the end of ‘grand narratives’ or ‘metanarratives’ as far back as the 1980s (Lyotard 1984). Around the same time, Alvin Toffler viewed the development of societies

as taking place through a series of ‘waves’ (1984). The first wave was the agrarian society that replaced the early hunter-gatherer cultures. The second was the industrial revolution, characterised by the notion of ‘mass’ (production, distribution, consumption and so forth). Finally, the third wave is the post-industrial society, where knowledge is the primary resource. Reflecting on this, we can see that leadership was emphasised in the first wave, and bureaucracy in the second. In the third wave, however, we are witnessing the re-emergence of leadership as societies increasingly challenge the necessity for bureaucracy and institutions – the global economy and media have taken their place as platforms that can seemingly provide us with a sense of integrated security. It remains to be seen whether further civilizations are yet to emerge from the pre-modern and modern phases, although it seems that pre-modernism has reappeared in a heavily technologized form.

The tension that emerges between strong leadership and the ‘iron cage’ of institutions enables us to see what military organizations exemplify rather clearly. On the one hand, they are notably hierarchical in nature. On the other, there are cultures of military education that are torn between conflicting logics. Moreover, the process of contemporary warfare is highly institutionalised, regulated and measured. It is in these institutions that officers are socialised to obedience; but they also glorify heroism in battle, personal sacrifice and the cult of ‘great leaders’ (Harrison 1978: 594). Thus, social development should be understood differently from technological development. Due to the ubiquitous influence of information networks and social media, the contemporary, increasingly pre-modern understandings of society have emerged to dominate the thinking within security organizations. As idealised accounts of the values of the Enlightenment prove to be impotent, the display of strength reappears as the criterion that divides people into those who lead and those who are led.

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