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Formation of military political leadership through the lens of history

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Abstract

By means of a documentary analysis methodology, the purpose of the article was to determine the main characteristics of the formation of military political leadership. The sources of the study are the classical works of Greek philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, and also the treatise “The Art of War”, in which the famous Chinese general Sun Tzu stresses the need for self-control, emphasizes the possibility of avoiding confrontation without a prior in-depth analysis of the situation and one’s own capabilities. In the process of research, the authors defined the concept of the military-political leader, as well as highlighted the fundamentals of the quality of the leader’s personality. The authors come to the conclusion that the military manager is a professional leader, a person who has special knowledge, talent and also has some information about the news in the field of combat organization, the use of weapons and management of a military organization. He is also a person who not only knows how to influence subordinates to his will, but also knows how to organize teamwork and be responsible for his actions.

Keywords: political-military leader; personality traits; military unit; leader image; historical perspective of leadership.

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Formación de liderazgo político militar a través de la lente de la historia

Resumen

Mediante una metodología de análisis documental el propósito del artículo fue determinar las principales características de la formación del liderazgo político militar. Las fuentes del estudio están conformadas por las obras clásicas de los filósofos griegos: Platón, Aristóteles, y también el tratado “El arte de la guerra”, en el que el célebre general chino Sun Tzu subraya la necesidad del autocontrol, hace hincapié en la posibilidad de evitar el enfrentamiento sin un previo análisis profundo de la situación y de las propias capacidades. En el proceso de investigación, los autores definieron el concepto de líder político-militar, así como destacaron los fundamentos de la calidad de la personalidad del líder. Los autores llegan a la conclusión de que el gerente militar es un líder profesional, una persona que tiene un conocimiento especial, talento y tiene además alguna información sobre las noticias en el campo de la organización del combate, el uso de armas y la gestión de una organización militar. Igualmente es una persona que no solo sabe cómo influir en los subordinados a su voluntad, del mismo modo, sabe cómo organizar el trabajo en equipo y ser responsable de sus acciones.

Palabras clave: líder político militar; rasgos de personalidad; unidad militar; imagen del líder; perspectiva histórica del liderazgo.

Introduction

• Problem statement

The history of human life demonstrates that people live and act in different group associations. Thus, there is an impact of both formal and informal leaders on the individual, as well as their (leaders) importance on the development of society and humanity in general. On the assumption of the creation of a group that involves more than two people, there will be a division of people into groups – those who lead the group and followers – who are subordinate to a certain extent to the recognized leader in this community. The appearance of a chain of command is inevitable if quantitative growth of the group occurs. At a certain stage of its existence, some members of the group begin to play a more active role in common livelihoods organization and become leaders (Metelska, 2022).

The military unit can be considered as a group with variable size because its members constantly arrive to or depart from it. However, its core

members remain the same. Changes in this group are due to the expiration of service, rotation, and other factors.

- **Literature review**

The issue of military leadership has its origins in ancient times and was determined by such commanders as Sun-Ji, Alexander Suvorov, Mikhail Kutuzov, and Helmuth von Moltke the Elder. The issues of public administration, monarchy, aristocracy, and leadership have long been reflected in the philosophers Aristotle, Plato, and Confucius. Michael Armstrong, Max Weber, Mykola Berdyaev, Niccolo Machiavelli, F. Taylor, and many others analyze the problem of leadership and single leadership in governing bodies already in the scientific context. In modern science E. Egorova-Gantman, L.E. Orban-Lembryk, V.S. Pokalyshyn, S.Y. Polyakov, V.V. Stasiuk, and others develop the problem of leadership and organization of military management in modern socio-economic realities (Taylor, 2002; Taylor, 2014).

The problem of establishing leaders has been actual since ancient times (Hreisa *et al.*, 2022). But a systematic, purposeful study of the leadership principles began with F. Taylor studies (early 19th century). Early research aimed to discover successful leaders' qualities or characteristics. According to the "great people" theory, the best leaders have a certain set of general and individual qualities. Research has shown that there is no such combination of individual qualities that all successful leaders have, because the leadership effectiveness is situational.

The domain of leadership as the effectiveness of military leadership was chosen by us not by chance, but because human history has shown a fruitful synthesis of prominent generals, military and political leaders of states, empires, republics of Persian kings Cyrus and Darius, Indian king Ashoka (Asoka), Roman leaders Gaius, Marcus Anthony, Julius Caesar, Russian emperor and general Peter I, Ukrainian Hetman B. Khmelnytsky; Napoleon Bonaparte, in the twentieth century. D. Eisenhower, S. de Gaulle in the XXI century.

The purpose of the article is to conduct a scientific and practical analysis of the history of development and formation of military leadership on the example of ancient China, to reveal the philosophy of leadership in a historical perspective, to illustrate modern requirements to the military commander as the sole leader of the military structure.

1. Methods

In the framework of the study authors used general scientific research methods including specialized research methods of comparative history science, logical and legal analysis, and concretization. The methodological basis of the study is constituted by the epistemological method.

In the course of the study, we analyzed legislation and historical literature, a comparative analysis of international approaches of leadership formation.

2. Results and discussion

Until the beginning of the twentieth century Plato was one of the first to raise the problem of leadership. He suggested three types of leaders in his treatise “State”:

- a) philosopher - a statesman who governs the republic on the basis of reason and justice;
- b) a military leader who protects the state and subordinates other people to his will;
- c) a businessperson who provide satisfaction of material needs (Bloom and Kirsch, 2016). Aristotle and later Montesquieu also contributed to the study of leadership. They identified three types of power. Aristotle – monarchy, aristocracy and democracy as the power of one, few and many, respectively, and Montesquieu - despotism, monarchy and republic. Machiavelli had an undoubted influence on modern research on political leadership as well as on the creation of methods for studying the phenomenon named after him in his work “The Emperor”, that was written in the XVI century (Ford, 2004).

The famous Chinese mastermind Sun-Tsu is one of the most prominent military philosophers and strategists of antiquity (Tzu and Giles, 2021). His works on the art of war were developed by his follower Sun-Bin and are highly valued by contemporaries. The ability to maintain a balance of strength and weakness, devotion and agility, attack and peace is a valuable skill that is still studied in business schools. The science of negotiating, evaluating the enemy and always achieving personal goals is still the primary task for modern managers and is especially important for a modern commander of a military unit.”

Considering leadership in foreign sources prior to the beginning of the 20th century, it would be better to start with the fact that the disputes about leadership are more than two thousand years old. Even in ancient China

during the time of Confucius, there were discussions about what is more important for leadership – power, control, or knowledge of the laws. In the 3rd century BC. Believed that the main purpose of the art of government – to separate the loyal and crafty officials, to test their abilities and monitor success in order to strengthen government based on the law (Schiller, 2011).

In the understanding of Confucius, the welfare of the state should rest on the education of the people and on their conscious fulfillment of the requirements of state ethics and morality. And the rulers were charged with the task of correcting the morals and increasing the knowledge of the people (Schiller, 2011).

Lao Tzu, on the other hand, believed that an educated person was unhappy. Here is how he explained his position:

If you do not value the wise men, then there will be no quarrels among the people. If you do not appreciate rare items, then there will be no thieves. If you do not show what can cause envy, then the hearts of nations will not worry. Therefore, in governing, the perfect wise man makes hearts empty and their stomachs full. It weakens their will, but it strengthens their bones. He always strives to ensure that the people do not have knowledge and passions, and those who have knowledge would not dare to act ... (Tzu, 2011: 36).

An example of such a government is Sparta, which gave the state great commanders, but not a single philosopher. Sparta as a state existed for five hundred years and only after departing from the laws given by Lycurgus did it fail. Two circumstances contributed to the fall of the state: greed burst out, which nestled somewhere in the depths of the consciousness of the citizens of Sparta, and the actions of those with knowledge despite the prohibitions.

The book *Science of Victory (Nauka Pobezhdat)* written by the outstanding generalissimo of the Russian army A. Suvorov is the greatest contribution to the military management treasury.

Mikhail Kutuzov (1745-1813), in the new changed conditions of the war, relied on his activities on the staff, fully using it to exercise command and over the troops. Consequently, he substantiated and created the line-and-staff structure of the army, 100 years ahead of the classic of American military management G. Emerson (1853-1931), who substantiated the line-and-staff management in production, using the works of the military theoretician of the Prussian Field Marshal General Molke the Elder (1800-1891).

As noted by L. Orban-Lembrik, “the commander must stick to the following points to conduct proper assessment of the situation and make all necessary adjustments to his/her activities:

1. To have sufficient understanding of the abilities and capabilities of subordinates;
2. To know your own abilities, capabilities;
3. To understand the nature of the goals and objectives faced by the group (organization);
4. To be clearly aware of the needs, interests and aspirations of group members;
5. To see clearly the lines of authority;
6. To be able to carry out the assessment of the accuracy of information and to strengthen the information on the basis of which the decisions and action plans are made and implemented” (Orban-Lembrik, 2003).

Throughout the Art of War, Sun Tzu emphasizes the necessity of self-control, insisting on avoiding engagements, without deep analysis of the situation and friendly forces capabilities. Haste and fear or cowardice, as well as anger and hatred, are unacceptable when making decisions in the state and in command. The army must never be hastily engaged, pushed into war, or assembled without important reasons. Instead, restraint should be exercised, although every effort should be made to ensure the invincibility of the army.

In addition, some tactical situations and types of terrain should be avoided and, if so, they should become advantages. Special attention should then be given to the implementation of the campaign’s strategy and the use of appropriate tactics to defeat the enemy (Tzu and Giles, 2021).

The basic principle is, “Go forward where you’re not expected; attack where they’re not prepared.” This principle can be realized only thanks to the secrecy of all actions, complete self-control and iron discipline in the army, and also “incomprehensibility”. Throughout the book, Sun-Tzu discusses the most important problem of command: the creation of a clear organization controlling disciplined, obedient troops.

The essential element is the spirit known as chi, the most important life power. This component is associated with will and motivation; when people are well-trained, properly fed, clothed and equipped, if their spirits are ignited, they will fight fiercely (Tzu and Giles, 2021).

However, if their physical condition or material conditions dull their spirit; if, in the relations between commanders and subordinates, the people have lost their motivation; army will be defeated. On the contrary, the commander must manage the situation so as to avoid the enemy when he is strong in spirit - as, for example, at the beginning of the day - and

take every opportunity when this condition weakens and the troops are unwilling to fight, such as when they return to camp.

Sun Tzu in his treatise “The Art of War” (Tzu and Giles, 2021) gives advice to the military commander that is still relevant for modern iron discipline in the Armed Forces. First, the commander has five dangers: if he strives to die at all costs, he may be killed; if he strives at all costs to stay alive, he can be captured; if he is quick to anger, he may be despised; if he is too scrupulous to himself, he may be insulted; if he loves people, he can be weakened. Secondly, a commander, who during his speech, does not seek glory, but, retreating, does not evade punishment, who thinks only about the welfare of the people and the benefit of the head of state, such a commander is a treasure for the state.

And thirdly, if the commander looks at the soldiers as children, he will be able to go with them to the deepest gorge; if he looks at the soldiers as beloved sons, you can go with them even to death. But if he is kind to them, but will not be able to dispose of them; if he loves them, but does not know how to order them; if they have riots, and the commander is not able to establish order, this means that they are naughty children of the commander, and it will be impossible to use them.

Leadership is not just a set of qualities, traits, techniques. It is the ability to direct one’s efforts to oneself, to a dynamic, qualitative change. The leader changes others, changing himself at the same time. Hence the conclusion – you cannot learn leadership; you can become a leader (Bakhov *et al.*, 2018; Guk *et al.*, 2019).

According to the survey conducted in higher military educational institutions of Ukraine: “How do you see your commander (leader)?” For cadets (future officers) the commander (leader) is a senior comrade, mentor, bearer of knowledge, culture, morality, the one who is able and wants to understand and help; it is also the one they look up to and the one who cannot be neglected. The commanders (leaders) are as demanding of themselves as they are of their subordinates; they are organizers who value not only their opinions but those of others as well.

The leadership qualities of a military commander can be seen in the order. A sense of personal responsibility of a military leader, who is definitely a commander and has to be able to command is concentrated in the order. The commander’s order must be prepared in advance and thus could be realized by the executors.

Therefore, without the commander-to-subordinates cooperation, an order is like an arrow flying against the wind. Even the suddenness of the order must be foreseen. Then it will turn into an experienced tension. A military commander knows how to evoke cooperation not only in deeds but also in thinking. Only then the soldier can be let off. The order obliges oneself to act independently (Bakhov *et al.*, 2018; Guk *et al.*, 2019).

First of all, leadership problems are especially relevant for the army and navy, where urgent solutions are required in emergency situations. It would seem, where, if not during exercises, you can select and improve leadership skills. Daniel Kahneman (2013) in his book “Thinking, Fast and Slow” gives an example of the selection of future officers in the Israeli army, which used the methods developed in Great Britain, in particular, the test “The fight without a commander”. Eight unfamiliar applicants for the officer rank were asked to overcome the obstacle. Observing the candidates, the experts noted who undertook to command the “operation”, who tried to show leadership qualities.

The experts were confident that in the future the officers would act in accordance with their conclusions regarding their suitability as leaders. In the future, the experts received information about the candidates’ service. By processing the feedback data, they were convinced that, alas, their predictions came true with the probability “a little better than guessing by the thrown coin”. Understanding that the teaching and the actual situation are different from each other, they influenced the behavior of candidates. This is probably due to the understanding of the difference in the degree of risk during exercises and under real conditions in battle (Kahneman, 2013).

The current officer is the leader – the leading official who is able to organize the effective activity of the military formation and lead subordinates.

Jim Collins (2017) in his book “Good to Great” argues that the hierarchy of skills consists of four levels:

The first level. Highly professional employee. Actively uses his abilities, knowledge, experience, ability to organize his work and the work of others.

The second level. Valuable and competent manager. Makes a personal contribution to the common cause. Effectively interacts with other team members, organizes people and rationally allocates resources.

The third level. An effective leader. Forms the vision of the group and consistently ensures that the organization, the team as a whole move along the planned path. Provides high standards of work quality.

The fourth level. A leader of high professional level. His leadership allows to achieve exceptional and long-term and stable results due to the paradoxical combination of outstanding qualities of a leader and managerial abilities.

Conclusions

Nowadays, a good leader of an organization is a person who is both a leader and effectively manages his subordinates, there are many examples

of such a transformation in the past and today. The combination of the qualities of a formal and informal leader is optimal for a leader. However, such a symbiosis in one person of these social roles, especially the roles of official leader and emotional leader is complex, and requires time, desire, appropriate traits.

According to many scholars, leaders are “born”, but to an even greater extent they become them through learning, hard individual work, full of knowledge of practical experience and skills. Based on all this, almost every competent and far-sighted leader can become a business, in many ways an emotional leader who looks to the future, developing himself and his team.

Thus, the system of requirements for the level of professional competence of a commander as a leader of a military unit should include the following necessary components:

1. Personal qualities: - adherence to the principles of military service; - self-improvement; result orientation; - responsibility.
2. Information handling skills: - collecting and sharing data; - analyzing information; - implementing improvements and innovations; - strategic planning; - making command and control decisions of the military commander at the appropriate level.
3. Management skills: - using and managing resources; - planning, organizing, and executing work; - adapting to and managing change.
4. Communication skills: - effective communication; - teamwork skills; - managing and supporting others.

Accordingly, military leadership cannot be taught; it can be improved, but only in those whose leadership qualities are inherent in nature. But a military commander (leader), besides the ability to give orders, should be taught the ability to understand and execute orders.

Therefore, the basics of military leadership must be known to all, both commanders and subordinates. Especially when in a combat situation we have to act in extreme situations, when there is no time to understand and clarify orders.

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