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Military Leadership System in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: Current Issues and Ways to Tackle Them

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Abstract. Despite the fact that in recent years considerable attention has been paid to the development of military leadership, the system of military leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is not yet fully formed. Therefore, research on the formation and development of this system, studying the problematic issues identified in this process and identifying ways to solve them is currently relevant. The majority of scientific publications in this area mainly consider the psychological aspects of the leadership phenomenon. At the same time, the issues related to the formation and development of the military leadership system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine have remained unaddressed by most researchers. Therefore, in this article the authors present the results of the analysis of problematic issues in the system of military leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, identify possible ways of solving them, and provide a model of a promising system of military leadership. The results of the analysis carried out by the authors of the article show that today the Armed Forces of Ukraine have different elements, which are not united into a single system and partially fulfil the task of forming, supporting and developing the leadership qualities of servicemen. The main problems include the following: violation of the principle of unity of command in military leadership; imperfection of the regulatory framework for military leadership; incompatibility of the content of educational components for training military leaders with the requirements for leadership competencies; imperfection of the existing methods for assessing the leadership qualities of military personnel; lack of a fair, stable and transparent system for motivating military leaders, etc. In order to create an effective system of military command in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the authors propose the following priority measures to create structural units responsible for the organisation and support of military leadership in the Main Personnel Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in personnel centres of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and branches of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as well as in the commands of individual branches of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; to

organise work on the clarification of curricula for the training of officers and non-commissioned officers; to organise scientific research aimed at the development of methods for determining (diagnosing) the level of leadership.

Keywords: leadership, model of military command system, training of military leaders.

Introduction

Given the current situation, in which Ukraine is simultaneously deterring the full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation and implementing the strategic commitment to joining the European Community (Strategic Defense Bulletin (2021)), the Armed Forces of Ukraine are in need of competent subject matter experts with strong leadership skills capable of not only effectively defending the country, but also operating together with units and formations of the armed forces of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member-states. These principles have become the cornerstones for the implementation of both the Military Leadership Doctrine of the National Guard of Ukraine (2021) and the Doctrine for the Development of Military Leadership of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (2020). In light of the current policy objectives reflected in the Military Security Strategy of Ukraine (2021), the military-political leadership of Ukraine has tasked the Armed Forces of Ukraine with developing a new style of military leadership and transforming the professional culture following the best Euro-Atlantic practices. In his research Kobzar (2020) explores the issues of refining the key definitions and concepts of moral and psychological support and the difficulties in establishing a leadership system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Analysis of the Regulation on the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (2020) shows that the military leadership system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine has not yet been fully developed and is undergoing a period of imbalance. Therefore, any research that could assist in establishing and advancing the aforementioned system, while also finding ways to tackle issues identified in the process is highly relevant under given circumstances. According to Bilshynskyi (2020) the military leadership system has to be based on both theoretical and practical pillars. Ensuring interoperability between the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other elements of the national defense and security forces, as well as equivalent entities of partner countries, requires implementing a shared vision of military leadership, abiding by the fundamental principles for its development, as well as standards, values, personal qualities, and core competencies of military leaders. The works of Poltieva (2023), Wong (2009), and Mirshuk (2020) define military leadership as the key component of mission success for both individual service members on various levels, and military units (formations), including their commanders and staff. In the armed forces of NATO member-states (for example, as stipulated by the guidelines of the Headquarters of the US Department of the Army (2019) and supported by the findings of analytical research by Loughlin (2007) and Reed (200)) military leadership, among other things, is rooted in values, traditions, ethical behavior, a deep understanding of and strict adherence to military discipline and culture within the military unit. Karpenko (2021) believes that a way to improve the command and control system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is through the introduction of various education and training programs for leadership development. The aforementioned programs are designed to develop the leadership skills and abilities of military personnel at all levels, from junior officers to senior commanders. The theoretical and methodological principles of change management are also used in the development and implementation of military policy and strategy. They lay out the foundations for a new system of joint command and control of the Armed Forces, emphasizing the importance of cooperation and coordination between the different branches and services. By adopting these methodological frameworks, the military leadership system in Ukraine can effectively guide and support military personnel in their duties, ensuring the state's security. Therefore, taking into account the lessons learned from the existing military leadership systems of NATO member states, Ukraine is presented with a particularly urgent challenge, as the country has to develop its own comprehensive system,

taking into account national and historical factors.

Methodological Framework

The Doctrine on the Development of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (2020) reflects a system of views on leadership development, basic principles, standards, levels, values, virtues, character traits, and core competencies of military leaders. Military leadership remains a key component of ensuring both the professional growth of individual service members of different categories (as Browne points out there exists a list of possibilities (2009) for its contextual assessment) and the mission success of military command bodies (Hutchison (2018)) and military units (formations) (Snihur (2016)), regardless of the variety of definitions and implementation methods. According to the US Army Leader Development Strategy (2019) and the findings in the publications by Daft (2013) and Zaccaro (2003) military leadership plays a decisive role, in particular, in instilling the values, traditions, behavioral ethics, compliance with military discipline and corporate military culture in the armed forces of NATO member states. C2 (management) in the military allows to ensure stability, control over most processes, and monitoring of mission outcomes, while military leadership drives positive change by focusing on inspiring and engaging with personnel. Thus, the key to effective command and control in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is for commanders to combine management and leadership processes.

Findings

Having carried out a comprehensive analysis, the authors of the paper found that as of today, the Armed Forces of Ukraine have various isolated elements existing outside of a unified system that only partially fulfills the objective of developing, sustaining, and improving leadership skills in service members (Table 1). Simultaneously, it is important to highlight the following key issues (Table 2):

violation of the unity of command principle in military leadership matters;

shortcomings of the existing legislative framework on military leadership;

discrepancies between the contents of the curricula components dedicated to military leader training and the requirements for leadership competencies;

flawed nature of the available methodologies for evaluating leadership skills in service members;

lack of an equitable, sustainable, and transparent incentive system for military leaders, etc.

In order to address these issues, the Armed Forces of Ukraine need to establish an effective and practical military leadership system capable of fostering a new generation of military leaders with critical thinking and providing them with further support throughout their military careers. A model of the aforementioned system is presented in Figure 1. The authors believe that a sustainable system of military leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine must comprise:

entities exerting influence:

Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (according to the distribution of powers)

Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (according to the distribution of powers);

commanders and chiefs of all levels of subordination;

entities subjected to influence:

officers, NCOs, and enlisted personnel identified and selected for leadership development;

other elements (components) of the system:

Main Personnel Directorate (J-1) of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

Main Directorate of Doctrines and Training (J-7) of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

Central Military Education Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

Central Military Science Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

NCO Directorate of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

Main Directorate of Moral and Psychological Support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (an organic unit for psychological support);

Personnel Management Center of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and personnel management centers of branches of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

Command bodies of branches and services of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

Higher military education institutions and training centers;

interacting elements:

Department of Personnel Policy of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine;

Department of Military Education and Science of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.

There are some critical points that serve as the quality control elements for the military leadership system. These critical points allow to evaluate the effectiveness of the military leader training and education and, if need be, make adjustments to the objectives for military leader development. Distributions of the main objectives between the elements of the military leadership system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine are shown in Figure 1.

In order to establish an efficient and sustainable military leadership system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine the authors suggest to implement the following top priority measures:

first, to create organic units responsible for managing and supervising military leaders:

at the Main Personnel Directorate (J-1) of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine - a Directorate for Military Leadership Development;

at the Personnel Management Center of the Armed Forces of Ukraine - a Section for Career Guidance for Military Leaders;

at the personnel management centers of the Land Forces, Air Force, and Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine - a Section for Career Guidance for Military Leaders;

at the Special Operations Forces Command, Air Assault Forces Command, Combat Support Command, Logistics Command, Medical Command, Territorial Defense Forces Command, and Communication and Cybersecurity Forces Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine - sections (detachments) for military leader support;

second, to coordinate efforts to revise the military leadership curricula for officers and NCOs in higher military educational institutions and training centers;

thirdly, to initiate research aimed at developing methods designed to measure the level of leadership qualities of service members of the branches (services) of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, to test these methods and, if proven to be effective, to introduce them into the certification system of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

fourth, to establish an equitable, sustainable, and transparent incentive system for military leaders in the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

fifth, to draft a new version of the Doctrine on the Development of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine along with a road map to implement it taking into consideration all of the suggestions listed above.

Discussions In recent years, military leadership has garnered a lot of attention from military experts and scholars around the world. Punda (2017) believed strategic leadership development to be an investment in the reform of the military command and control system; Marshall-Mies (2002) focused on the development and assessment of cognitive and metacognitive indicators for predicting leadership potential; Barko's (2010) research focused on the psychology of leadership, while Boiko (2015) perceived transformational leadership as a conceptual framework for the development of leadership competence of future officers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Table 1. Involvement of the organic command and control bodies, higher military education and research institutions of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and the Armed Forces of Ukraine in achieving the objectives for the military leadership system

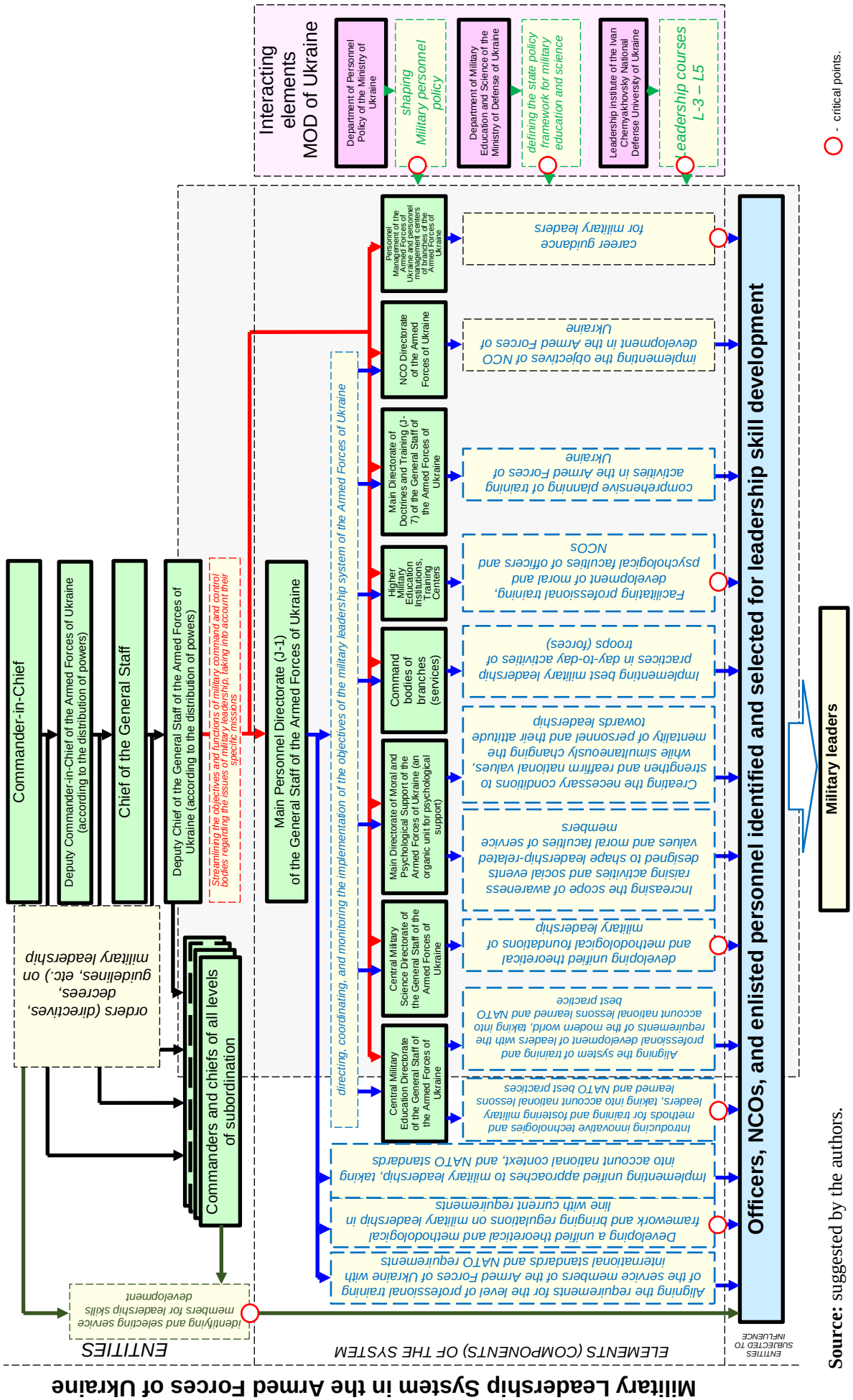
Objectives of the military leadership system	Ministry of Defense of Ukraine				Directly subordinate to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine									Higher Military Education Institutions, Training Centers of branches (services)
	Department of Military Education and Science	Department of Personnel Policy	National Defense University of Ukraine	Personnel Policy Science and Methodology Center	Main Personnel Directorate	Main Directorate of Doctrines and Training	Central Military Science Directorate	Central Military Education Directorate	Main Directorate of Moral and Psychological Support	NCO Directorate of the Armed Forces of Ukraine	Personnel Management Center of the Armed Forces of Ukraine	Central Research and Development Institute of the Armed Forces of Ukraine	Humanitarian Research and Development Center of the Armed Forces of Ukraine	
1. Aligning the requirements for the level of professional training of the service members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with international standards and NATO requirements	■		■			■		■						■
2. Coordinating efforts and developing common views on military leadership	■	■				■			■	■				
3. Developing a unified theoretical and methodological framework and bringing regulations on military leadership in line with current requirements	■	■	■	■		■	■					■	■	■
4. Streamlining the objectives and functions of military command and control bodies regarding the issues of military leadership, taking into account their specific missions	■	■		■						■				
5. Implementing unified approaches to military leadership, taking into account national context, and NATO standards	■													
6. Introducing innovative technologies and methods for training and fostering military leaders, taking into account national lessons learned and NATO best practices	■			■										
7. Increasing the scope of awareness-raising activities and social events designed to shape leadership-related values and moral faculties of service members									■				■	
8. Implementing best military leadership practices in the day-to-day activities of troops (forces)								■		■				
9. Creating the necessary conditions to strengthen and reaffirm national values, while simultaneously changing the mentality of personnel and their attitude toward leadership			■				■						■	■
10. Aligning the system of training and professional development of leaders with the requirements of the modern world, taking into account national lessons learned and NATO best practice		■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
11. Facilitating professional training, development of moral and psychological faculties of officers and NCOs			■											■

Source: developed by the authors based on the analysis of: Military Leadership Doctrine of the National Guard of Ukraine (2021); Doctrine on the Development of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (2020); Regulation on the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (2020); Military Security Strategy of Ukraine (2021).

Table 2. Issues in the Military Leadership Training in the Armed Forces of Ukraine

No.	ISSUES	THEIR DESCRIPTION	WAYS TO TACKLE THEM
1.	**Shortcomings of the existing legislative framework** on military leadership	• The Law of Ukraine "On Education" **does not mention the system for military leader training** as part of military education, instead it only mentions the notion of "professional military education"; • The Doctrine on the Development of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: ✓ **does not outline a general system** for military leadership training; ✓ **does not specify the leadership-related objectives** for military bodies and institutions; ✓ **does not provide solutions** to the issues of military leadership development; • **there are no relevant guidelines** that elaborate on the general provisions of the Doctrine on the Development of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.	• **Amend the Law of Ukraine "On Education"** adding a military leader training component to the system of military education; • Amend **the Doctrine on the Development of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine** in the parts detailing the composition of the military leader training system, the objectives for military bodies and institutions and the solutions for the most common issues of military leadership development, **taking into account American FM 6-22 Army Leadership: Competent, Confident, and Agile** as well as best practices of NATO member states (ADP 6-22, Army Leadership and the Profession); • develop relevant guidelines that would elaborate on the general provisions of the Doctrine on the Development of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.
2.	**Violation of the unity of command principle** in military leadership matters	Entities involved in addressing the aforementioned issues are: • in the **Ministry of Defense of Ukraine** - Department of Personnel Policy and Department of Military Education and Science that **report to different deputies of the Minister of Defense of Ukraine**; • under the **direct subordination to the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine** - Main Directorate of Moral and Psychological Support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and CO Directorate of the Armed Forces of Ukraine that **report to different deputies of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine**; • in the **General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine** - Main Personnel Directorate, Main Directorate of Doctrines and Training, Central Military Science Directorate, Central Military Education Directorate that **report to different deputies of the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine**;	• **redistribute powers among deputies of the Minister of Defense of Ukraine, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine**, designating one official at each level to manage (coordinate) military leadership issues; • **clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the relevant organic units** of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and units directly subordinate to the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on issues related to military leadership.
3.	**Discrepancies between the contents of the curricula components** dedicated to military leader training and the requirements for leadership competencies	The Doctrine on the Development of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine lists the basic values, virtues, character traits, and core competencies related to military leadership and their levels (immediate, organizational, and strategic) that need to be acquired. **At the same time, educational materials on military leadership training for the most part are:** • **lacking clear requirements** for NCO/officer leaders and **criteria for leadership evaluation**; • **focused on the universal scientific and philosophical concepts** of military leadership, the basics of rhetoric and public speaking, psychological aspects of being an officer leader in a team, the basics of strategic communications, and the legal framework of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; • **not fully taking into account** the best international practices and lessons learned by national instructors (with practical experience in the field); • **based on traditional forms** and methods of training.	• with the aim of selecting, evaluating, mentoring, and providing career management and support to best military leaders, **to design a model for acquiring the leadership skills for the officers and NCOs** of the Armed Forces of Ukraine outlining clear requirements for an officer/NCO leader and leadership evaluation criteria taking into account NATO standards (for example, ADP 6-22, Army Leadership and the Profession) and national lessons learned; • envisage training for L2-L5 instructors in educational institutions of **NATO member states** to gain expertise and learn about best educational practices; • introduce the method of **involving instructors with practical experience** (veterans with combat experience) in L-courses; • in addition to traditional forms and methods of training military leaders (lectures, seminars, workshops), **introduce innovative methods, such as**: coaching sessions, master classes, methods of crisis modeling, critical thinking techniques, etc.
4.	**Flawed nature of the available methodologies for evaluating leadership** skills in service members	• Procedure for organizing and conducting certification of military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine: ✓ **fails to explicitly address the assessment of the leadership qualities of officers and NCOs.** Instead, it mentions the assessment of certain individual manifestations of leadership qualities, such as: the effectiveness of command and control, professional growth of subordinates, document management, and the ability to organize and conduct classes; ✓ **procedure envisages the evaluation of leadership skills only for enlisted personnel;** • **currently used psychological tests** for determining the level of leadership skills in service members allow to **only partially identify and measure these skills** (as evidenced by **the track record** of using the tests recommended by the Main Directorate of Moral and Psychological Support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine **in 2012**); • **levels of leadership skills have not been formally implemented** for the purposes of assessing officers and NCOs for further promotions.	• **initiate research on the psychological framework of the leadership qualities** in service members to used as basis for the implementation of the leadership concept in the Armed Forces of Ukraine; • **develop new methodologies for psychological testing** to study a range of leadership traits displayed by service members; • take into account leadership qualities **when assessing officers and NCOs** for further promotion.
5.	Lack of an equitable, sustainable and transparent **incentive system** for military leaders in the Armed Forces of Ukraine	**An imperfect incentive system** for military leaders in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and insufficient remuneration **lead to**: • **loss of talented leaders.** Leaders who do not receive adequate reward and recognition for their work may look for other opportunities where their efforts are better appreciated; • **a decline in motivation and enthusiasm.** Leaders who do not receive adequate financial incentives may lose motivation and enthusiasm for their duties. This can lead to reduced productivity, inefficient problem-solving, and general negligence in the performance of duties; • **decrease in discipline and motivation of subordinates.** Insufficient motivation of leaders can negatively affect the discipline and motivation of subordinates. If leaders do not exhibit personal interest and do not demonstrate effective performance, this can be passed on to the team, which can lead to an overall decrease in productivity and efficiency in the Armed Forces of Ukraine; • **decrease in the combat readiness and combat capability** of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Leaders who do not feel adequately incentivized and recognized for their work may not show the necessary passion and commitment to their duties. This can affect their ability to make important decisions, particularly when on the battlefield; • **rise of corrupt and unprofessional practices.** Insufficient motivation can lead to corrupt practices among leaders (extortion of bribes, abuse of power, and other unprofessional behavior, etc.); • **loss of confidence of military personnel in their leaders.** When the service members see that their leaders are not properly incentivized and rewarded, it can break discipline, cause dissatisfaction, and reduce trust in leadership.	• **graded system of remuneration and financial compensation**, which includes a base salary, additional payments, bonuses, premiums and other forms of financial incentives; • implementation of **social security packages**, such as: health insurance, retirement benefits, military housing, preferential terms for paying for children's education, etc.; • introduction of a system of **tax incentives and financial packages**: housing loans, mortgages, financial support in case of emergency; • **opportunities for professional development and career growth**, including additional education, advanced training courses, and participation in international exercises and missions; • improvements in **the quality of working conditions and military infrastructure** through modern equipment, improved accommodations on home bases and at military facilities, and the creation of fitness and recreation areas; • implementation of **a recognition and honor system**, which includes awards, honorary titles, distinctions and other forms of public recognition; • ensure **a work-life balance** that allows leaders to have time for family, recreation, and personal growth.
6.	The system of **pre-conscription training** for young people does not address issues of military leadership	• the curricula of general secondary (vocational) education institutions **do not include the topic of military leadership**.	• include in the curricula of general secondary (vocational) education institutions the topic of military leadership **as part of the "Defense of Ukraine"** subject.

Source: suggested by the authors.



Source: suggested by the authors.

Figure 1. Sustainable model of the military leadership system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine

Analyzing the research carried out by Dumenko (2008) it is possible to identify and examine the role and significance of personnel policy in the Armed Forces of Ukraine as part of the overarching reforms. In a number of Ukrainian publications, the authors mainly consider the psychological aspects of the leadership phenomenon but do not provide any ideas on how to establish a military leadership system in Ukraine.

From a practical point of view, it is worth noting that in 2020 Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine approved the Doctrine on the Development of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (2020), and in 2021 a similar publication was produced by the National Guard (2021). Both of the aforementioned documents reflect the system of views on military leadership in their respective organizations, as well as present the basic principles of its development, standards, levels, values, virtues, character traits, and basic competencies of military leaders. In the meantime issues related to the establishment and advancement of the military leadership system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine have been overlooked by most researchers.

Conclusions

The article summarizes the results authors obtained while analyzing the current issues in the field of military leadership. In order to tackle said issues, authors suggest to implement a range of measures to improve the organizational structure, regulatory framework, educational components, methodological materials, and incentive factors with the aim of creating an effective military leadership system in the Armed Forces of Ukraine capable of not only raising the new generation of critical thinkers in leadership, but also supporting them throughout their entire career.

Further research should be aimed at elaborating on the general provisions of doctrinal (conceptual) documents in the field of military leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Recommendations

The findings presented in this paper, including the suggested sustainable model for the military leadership in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, analysis of issues in military leader training in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and ways to tackle them, can be used by military command and control bodies involved in the military leadership development process.

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