MILITARY LEADERSHIP AND LEADERS[1]

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"Military leadership is an art, a creative activity based on character, ability, and mental power".

1. Introduction

In his book "Narren, Nulpen, Niedermacher" (original title: "Military Blunders"), which describes the mishaps of incompetent military commanders, Geoffrey Regan (1998: 7)[2] writes:

> "There are just as many incompetent physicians, dentists, accountants, lawyers, teachers and engineers as there are incapable military commanders. For its potential impact on society, however, military failure often has much more serious consequences. In civil aviation, a pilot might cause the death of several hundreds of people, while the decision of a general might kill tens of thousands of people."

Given that the actions taken by military commanders are highly significant, one would expect that a great deal of research would have already been done on this topic. Surprisingly, though, in Germany this is only true to a limited extent. German history papers, particularly those published by the Military History Research Institute of the Bundeswehr, deal with military commanders and (war-time) events from a purely historical perspective. There are, however, sociological[3] and psychological papers that focus on this phenomenon.

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[1]   This article was originally published in the German language (Führung und Führer im Militär), published in the volume "Militärsoziologie – Eine Einführung" (2. Aufl., Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 475–493, 2012), editors **Nina Leonhard** and **Ines-Jacqueline Werkner**.

[2]   At the request of the author the in-text referencing style is used.

[3]   In this connection, attention should be drawn to the papers published by the "Wehrso-ziologische Forschungsgruppe" (Military Sociological Research Group), which, even though they are not very recent, can be considered fundamental in many respects and are also taken into account in this paper. See **Roghmann, Sodeur** 1968 and **König** 1977 on this topic.

In contrast, the Anglo-Saxon countries offer numerous empirical papers and extensive discussions on this subject. In addition, as far as the German-speaking countries are concerned, the papers published by the ETH in Zurich, where one part of Swiss officer training is conducted[4], should not go unmentioned, either. Leadership, however, is heavily influenced by the relevant country's general and military culture, which is why these foreign research papers, unfortunately, can hardly be transposed to the German environment.

Persons looking for German texts containing the keywords "Führung" – which in the context of this article will be translated as "leadership" which can also mean "command and control" – and "Bundeswehr", will first encounter articles about the most recent scandals, in addition to various reports issued by the Parliamentary Commissioner of the Armed Forces. They will, however, subsequently encounter information associated with the concept of "Innere Führung" (Internal Leadership and Civic Education). This term describes a reform concept that was developed by a small group of officers around Wolf Graf von Baudissin in the 1950s, when the Bundeswehr was established.[5] The objective of this concept was to integrate the armed forces into the young democracy of the Federal Republic of Germany, wherein the civic rights of the force's personnel were to remain as unaffected as possible during military service. Later, the concept became more formalized and was published in the form of Joint Service Regulation ZDV 10/1 "Innere Führung", and then further developed into multiple new versions. Although the buzzword "Innere Führung" is associated with a large amount of both oral and written information about leadership and command and control, and although "Innere Führung" is frequently even referred to as the Bundeswehr's leadership concept, it should rather be considered the Bundeswehr's organisational philosophy. "Innere Führung" thus describes the Bundeswehr's (corporate) principles but does not deal with the immediate practical challenges that are faced by military leadership. Instead, it is centred on general leadership norms, and makes no mention of military skills at all.

Someone who further wishes to widen their search for publications on leadership and Bundeswehr on this subject will find a kind of advice booklet on military leadership, small editions of which are available at specific

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[4]   See particularly the studies published by the military academy at the ETH in Zurich, e.g. **Steiger** 2009.

[5]   See, among other sources, **Schlaffer** 2007, **Dörfler-Dierken** 2006 and the article "Zivil-militärische Beziehungen" by **vom Hagen**, also contained in this book (**Leonhard, Werkner** 2012).

publishers (e.g. Oestmann 2006). Empirical research findings on Bundeswehr leadership, however, are very rare[6] and mostly obsolete, and theoretical, scientifically justified papers on this topic have not been published at all.

Nevertheless, in order to shed some light on the field of leadership and the military, and the German Bundeswehr in particular, this text will begin with a general description of the phenomenon of leadership (Chapter 2), beginning with a basic outline of leadership from an organisational point of view (Chapter 2.1). Then subsequently, some basic problems related to the analysis of leadership will be revealed (Chapter 2.2) before the structural particularities of military leadership are illustrated (Chapter 2.3). The second section of this paper (Chapter 3) will deal with leadership in the Bundeswehr. As the Bundeswehr is a governmental entity of the Federal Republic of Germany, it is also subject to legal provisions. Therefore, the legal standards that apply to leadership in Germany will need to be highlighted (Chapter 3.1), while the chapter that follows will examine how leadership is regarded within the Bundeswehr itself (Chapter 3.2). Finally, this paper will conclude with a presentation of some theoretical approaches that appear to be particularly promising insofar as an analysis of military leadership is concerned (Chapter 4).

2. Military Leadership from a Theoretical Point of View

2.1. What is Leadership from an Organisational Point of View?

It is widely accepted that armed forces, such as the Bundeswehr, are organisations. In this anthology, different aspects of the organisational character of armed forces are described very thoroughly by Elbe and Richter in the chapter "Militär: Institution und Organisation". As far as the analysis posited by this article is concerned, however, we consider the definition of Kaiser and Walgenbach (2003) to be an adequate starting point. They describe organisations as "*social entities that*
- *permanently pursue a specific goal,*
- *have a formal structure which helps to focus the activities of the members on the goal pursued*" [italics in the original, JK] (*loc. cit*. p. 6).

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6   In this connection, attention shall be drawn to some older research reports / working papers published by the Bundeswehr Institute of Social Sciences, each of which addresses specific aspects of leadership (**Kuhlmann** 1979, 1986, 1988).

Analysing the German term Führung at a general linguistic level reveals that it means a "general controlling and directing action". It becomes immediately clear that Führung (in the following translated as "leadership", see above) and organisation are directly intertwined with each other, due to the fact that the activities of any member of an organization can only be focused towards an organisation's goal through the control and direction of their action. With this in mind, Staehle (1999: 328) defines leading as follows:

> "exerting influence on the attitudes and behaviour of individual persons, and on the interactions within and between groups, in order to achieve certain goals. Leadership as a function is a role that is performed by different group members to a different extent."

Thus, Staehle defines leadership only as the direct, personal exertion of influence (*ibid.*), which merely represents one part of the directing and controlling action utilized by organisations and is mostly justified by the introduction of a hierarchy. In a broader sense, leadership in organisations can be interpreted as configuration and co-ordination (Kieser, Walgenbach 2003: 101–145). In this case, the term comprises both the organisation's set-up based on its different components (configuration) and the interaction (coordination) of these components. When interpreted in this way, leadership includes the process of designing a formal structure on the one hand, and the process of designing and controlling the relationships between the various elements and people on the other. This wider concept of leadership in organisations is also taken up by Rosenstiel (2002: 207–209), who explains the different aspects of leadership.

- *Corporate leadership* (also: management): this term is defined as including the selection of the legal form, the strategy, the markets to be tapped into, the alliances to be formed, the mission statements, and the written and unwritten laws etc.
- *Leadership substitutes*: based on the concept of a bureaucratic organisation developed by Weber (2009 [1922]), leadership substitutes are rules and regulations that have replaced the concrete personal will to lead. Leadership substitutes can be job descriptions, standardized process flows, incentive systems, or technical conditions like the speed of conveyor belts or the timing of robots, all of which direct the behaviour of the organisation's members without the superior interfering directly.
- *Personal exertion of influence*: "At a higher management level and within the context of existing or developing leadership substitutes, certain persons of an organisation use means of communication to deliberately and specifically influence other persons of the same organisation. In contrast,

leadership is usually considered the process of a hierarchic superior deliberately and specifically exerting influence on a person subordinate to him/her." (*ibid.*: 208)

This concept of leadership is based on an instrumental-rational, rather than a mechanistic idea, which assumes that human beings are able to perceive and form their environment in a rational manner. This notion is questioned by other scientific perspectives. The behavioural scientific decision theory, which was particularly promoted by Simon *et al.* (cf. Kieser, Walgenbach 2003: 40–43), for instance, assumes the limited rationality of the individual, whose information processing capacity is not sufficient to allow him/her to realise the complexity of the environment.

Constructivist theories even assume that, through communication and interaction, human beings create a social reality that appears as an objective reality to them or their descendants (cf. *ibid.*: 59). The form of leadership described above thus can only be conceived within a certain theoretical context, which assumes that human beings are able to think and act rationally and by extension, autonomously shape their environment.

2.2. Basic Problems of Leadership

In addition to the problem of rationality as outlined in the previous paragraph, leadership is influenced by another fundamental and problematic aspect, i.e. the measurement of the effectiveness of leadership. If leadership means influencing an organisation and its members to reach a specific objective, it must be possible to measure leadership in terms of the degree to which an objective has been achieved. Even though this sounds simple and plausible at first, on closer examination this process turns out to be extremely difficult. Initially, we have described organisations as "social structures". However, the use of the term "social", automatically characterises them as complex structures, as well. Complexity, however, means that the acting factors are no longer related to the human mind. "In most cases, success (of leadership) is reflected by indicators that can be determined based on the leader's personality, the behaviour or attitudes of the persons led by him/her, or the results of the organisational processes" (Rosenstiel 2002: 223). That means that, for one thing, it is difficult to actually determine the success of leadership and, for another thing, a certain effect can never be definitely attributed to one specific form of leadership. The hierarchic superior issues an order to his/her subordinates and notices a certain effect. It is, however, not clear whether

this effect is in fact a consequence of the order given or whether it can be attributed to other factors.

The attribution theory of leadership (Schettgen 1991) examines these phenomena in greater detail. In most cases, the success or failure of an organisation or an organisational element is attributed to the leader (failures are more frequently attributed to the persons being led). These attributions, which appear to be evident if considered in a pre-scientific manner, were further developed to form personality theories of leadership. The studies associated with these theories involved the search for personality traits of leaders (trait approach) that correlate with successful leadership – in whatever way the success was actually measured. These examinations resulted in the Great Man Theories, which enumerated the most diverse personality traits that make a leader a Great Man. An examination conducted over twelve editions of the journal "Personnel Psychology" in the early 1970s saw Lent *et al.* (1971: 519–533) find a total of 1500 personality traits that were supposed to be related to successful leadership. At an earlier point in time, Hofstätter (1957: 141) had already made the following resigning statement concerning this topic:

> "Sometimes the leader is older than his subordinates; sometimes he is younger. Some leaders are particularly robust and healthy, boasting something which is mysteriously called vital energy, while other accepted leaders are frail, epileptics, cripples or morphine addicts. The same can be said for the leader's intelligence and level of knowledge. Not even eloquence is required, as many celebrities suffer from speech defects [Italics in the original, J. K]."

Despite the heavy doubts that these findings cast on the personality theories, they continue to be commonly used in organisations. In the selection of personnel and the evaluation of leaders, in particular, they have played an important role until the present day – even in the Bundeswehr. This is also shown by the relevant practice-oriented advice literature addressing the topic of leader development.

A fundamentally different approach to the phenomenon of leadership is taken by Malik (1996). In contrast to the above-presented mechanistic concept of organisation (which he calls "constructivist"[7]), his concept is based on the notion that organisations and their environment correlate in a complex

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[7]   Unlike the social-constructivist theories cited above, Malik uses the term "constructivist" with a rather *technical-mechanical* meaning.

manner. Against this backdrop, he has developed a "systemic-evolutionary" approach:

> "The premises of the constructivist type of the management theory almost inevitably lead to the notion that systems are principally and largely controllable. The premises of the systemic-evolutionary approach destroy these hopes. They define that only one form of control, which can be called "soft" or "fuzzy" control, may be expected" (*ibid.*: 70).

In his opinion, this results in a distinct reduction and more modest appraisal of a leader's contribution. In fact, even those persons who base their actions as superiors on mechanistic assumptions concerning the importance of leadership, but pay attention to their environment and are perceptive, are bound to notice how small the direct impact of their actions actually is during the daily routine of their organisation.

2.3. What are the Structural Particularities of Leadership in the Military?

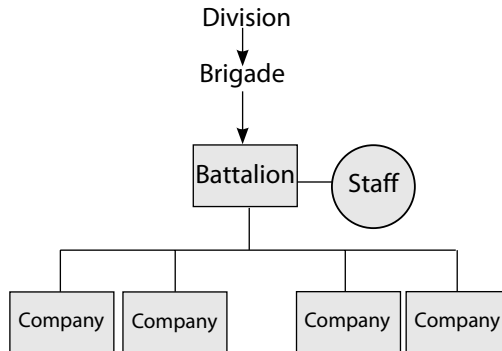### 2.3.1. Hierarchy and Levels of Command

Figure 1. Single-Line Staff System

Persons approaching the phenomenon of military leadership[8] first have to analyse where military leadership differs from leadership in other organisations:

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[8]   In this connection, it must be noted that the following presentation of military leadership will be ideal type, model type and thus shortened. Some military organisational elements, particularly the elements of the Air Force and the Navy or major authorities, can strongly differ from the elements outlined here.

> "The specific characteristic of the military, i.e. the threat and organised use of force to achieve political goals, distinguishes it from all other organisations, even though a large number of factors increase its similarity to major civilian organisations." (Ziegler 1968: 14)

The intention of a threat or the use of force is to hold or gain the upper hand over an opponent. As a prerequisite, the forces which can be deployed by a military organisation have to be focused in such a manner (in terms of space and time) that they will render the organisation superior. Consequently, it is imperative that the organization be capable of directing, or threatening to direct, the maximum force possible at a vital point at the right time. This requirement has led to the development of a configuration which is highly typical of the military – the single-line system, which most strongly reflects the principle of the unity of ordering (Kieser, Walgenbach 2003: 137–141). Each organisational element has only one superior element entitled to issue orders. This is the reason for the distinct hierarchy, which is considered a typical feature of all military organisations.[9] The advantage of the unity of ordering offered by this type of organisation, though, is offset by the high information processing load placed on the superior. In the diagram shown above (Figure 1), all information passes the battalion commander, who, consequently, in a way becomes the information flow bottleneck. By providing a staff, the military tries to decrease this load and, as a result, to increase the information capacity at battalion command level.

The hierarchic order of the elements displayed is also called the "level of command". In our diagram, the battalion level is the central level, with the company level below it. Even further below, but not shown in the diagram, are the platoon, squad and team levels. Above the battalion, there is the brigade, division, etc., up to the supreme commander. In times of peace, the Bundeswehr supreme commander is the Minister of Defence, but while in a state of defence this role is performed by the Federal Chancellor. Military levels of command are also distinguished in terms of other aspects, i.e. strategic, which include the operational and the tactical levels of command. The former designates the interface between politics and the military, where political decisions are concretely translated into militarily feasible options. The operational level, which is the middle level, refers to that area in which military actions form one overall context – the military operation. The tactical level, being the lowest level, is where the actual, individual, or "hot" combat

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9 Also see this book's (**Leonhard, Werkner** 2012) article "Militärische Kultur", written by **vom Hagen** & **Tomforde**.

action takes place. At each level, leadership is logically based on other conditions and becomes ever more bureaucratic and impersonal from the bottom to the top.

Roghmann and Sodeur (1968: 222) point out another difference from civilian organisations:

> "The duty of the military superior is characterized by issuing orders and leading people, not by administrating or supervising. The latter may include the former but at the same time goes beyond it. In the single-line system, military superiors have clearly more far-reaching powers and authorities than their counterparts in civilian organisations. Non-compliance with an order, for instance, is considered disobedience and will at least result in a disciplinary action being taken (if it has serious consequences, it will even be considered a military offence and legal measures will be taken). The integration into a strict hierarchy, the superior's extensive authority, which reaches as far as the subordinate's leisure time and personal life, and the high degree of control make the military resemble what Erving Goffman (1957) referred to as a "total institution".[10]

2.3.2. War and Peace

Another particularity of military leadership shall be shown by returning to the simple mechanistic model of organisation and choosing a definition from this conceptual realm – although with a slightly different point of view. Hill *et al*. (1981: 17) states that organisation is "the sum of all measures that are taken to achieve purposes and objectives […] and serve to
- structure a social system, and
- order the activities of the people that are part of this system, the employment of means and the processing of information."

The term "system" is the key to providing the essential difference to previous definitions, as this term integrates the definition into the thought structure of the system theory. Within this structure, (open) systems are embedded in a system environment and interact with it. Consequently, the environment has an impact on the system. As the military operates in two entirely different system environments – peace and war –, this theory is of great importance to understanding it. In times of peace, the military environment is a relatively stable, reliable value, which provides that the military's organisational objective is the "systematic training of a large number of people for their

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[10] See the article "Military Socialisation", written by **Apelt** in **Leonhard, Werkner** 2012.

assignment in a contingency situation" (König 1968b: 11). In this scenario, the armed forces act as a major training organisation that closely resembles the bureaucracy model developed by Weber (2009 [1922]; also cf. Kieser, Ebers 2006: 63–92). It functions in accordance with a particular standardized order, i.e. laws, rules and regulations; legal domination (Weber 2009 [1922]: 126) is the prevailing type of leadership. Legal domination allows for leadership to be largely replaced by the leadership substitutes described above; personal leadership in a stricter sense is primarily limited to the lowest organisational elements. A situation of contingency, i.e. operations involving the use of armed force, sees a totally different model of leadership. Depending on the conflict's intensity, the organisation's environment can become increasingly chaotic, and leadership complies less and less with the pre-defined bureaucracy model. This, however, does not apply to all parts of the organisation to the same extent, as the environment that is actually chaotic only has an impact on the organisation's lowest elements, which is where the fight with the enemy using armed force takes place. The further the organisational elements are from this side of the conflict, the more stable remains their organisational environment – despite all crises and difficulties that have to be overcome at these levels. The chaotic environment itself sees the personal style of leadership with ad-hoc decisions prevailing. This context, it appears, requires a different type of leader, who is more likely to fulfil the requirements of charismatic domination developed by Weber (2009 [1922]: 140–148). Roghmann and Sodeur (1968: 224) have already pointed out that the domination exercised by military leaders "can be based on such different aspects like the tradition, the charisma or the rational bureaucracy in the particular social situation of the total institution".

2.3.3. Controlling Chaos

The organisational purpose of the military is the co-ordinated use of, or threat of force, as dictated by politics, which takes place in a potentially chaotic environment i.e. the theatre of war. This results in a challenge for leaders, which does not exist during peace-time operations but does apply to the battlefield, where the military has to ensure that the organisation is coordinated even under chaotic conditions and the actions of the organisational members continue to be focused on gaining superiority. The first and most important measure taken for this objective to be reached is the establishment of a strong hierarchic structure, which serves to "co-ordinate the individual elements with regard to the common objective" (Roghmann, Ziegler

1977). This coordination is based on a chain of intermeshing decisions made at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Subordinate levels must always accord with the decisions made at the superior level. Consequently, the decision and, thus, the will of the superior level of command directly determines the actions taken by subordinate elements. This phenomenon explains both the strict and categorical necessity of obedience and the strong degree of military supervision and control, which can involve disciplinary action if required. All over the world, the significance of hierarchically structured decision situations is well reflected by the training of military leaders. Exercises are the most basic form of a training situation. A simple decision situation can take the form of a small map-based indoor-exercise; or it can also encompass highly complex simulations involving large forces and major equipment, also called large-scale exercises involving full-strength units. The main purpose of these exercises, though, is always to train decision processes, during which the leaders are supported by their staffs. The will of the superordinate command is to be implemented with a high degree of effectiveness at the subordinate military level of action. As described by Roghmann and Sodeur (1968: 222), the above-mentioned difference between civilian and military leadership – the duty of the military superior primarily consists of ordering and leading, and reaches beyond administrating or supervising – also refers to this process. In both the Bundeswehr and other armed forces, these decision processes are governed by written regulations, the command and control regulations[11], which will be addressed again further below.

Due to its complexity, the chaos of the battlefield does not allow for any prediction or pre-calculation as to what will happen and how the will of the superior command can actually be implemented. Furthermore, the introduction of ever more complicated weapon systems has led to combat situations becoming increasingly complex (Roghmann, Ziegler 1977: 161). With this in mind, the military has developed two entirely different strategies of action. One strategy is to organise and concentrate large masses that – not unlike steamrollers – will overrun the opponent in waves. The other strategy consists in permitting the subordinate elements some latitude in their decisions and actions in order to enable them to adapt to the situation as it unfolds amid the chaos and, thus, to respond appropriately. The first strategy sees the superior command issuing orders to develop a detailed "script", which has to be meticulously followed by the subordinate elements. This method

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[11] In the Bundeswehr, a large number of this type of regulations has been made available to the Army in the form of the Army Regulations of the 100/– Series.

is usually called order-type tactics and was the basic action pattern of the Warsaw Pact[12]. The second, more flexible procedure, which involves "setting subordinate elements a specific objective, while giving them a free hand in selecting the means", is called mission-type tactics (see Oetting 1993 and Leistenschneider for more detailed descriptions). While the German military claims to have developed this type of leadership in the 19th century and the Bundeswehr considers mission-type tactics to be one of its trademarks, there are doubts on whether this "liberal" strategy could actually prevail in a hierarchic organisation.

3. Leadership in the Bundeswehr

3.1. What Legal Standards Apply to Leadership and Obedience?

Previous sections of this article have compared the military to a total organisation as defined by Goffman. Therefore, now the question arises as to whether the Bundeswehr in the constitutional Federal Republic of Germany is based on these totalitarian principles and whether the superiors' claim to leadership and domination over their subordinates is really that extensive. As can be assumed by the reference to the constitutional character of the Federal Republic of Germany, issuing and obeying orders in the Bundeswehr is subject to legal standards, with exactly defined limits set to the process involved. The Soldatengesetz (Military Personnel Act), for example, states the following:

> "Superiors are those personnel who are authorized to issue orders to other military personnel. They are appointed by a statutory regulation on the basis of their position, rank, a special directive, or their own declaration."

Thus, a statutory regulation, the Vorgesetztenverordnung (ministerial directive governing superior-subordinate relations) clearly and precisely defines who is a superior and, as a result, who is authorized to issue orders (BMVg 1956). This directive defines a total of six different types of superiors with varying, precisely delineated grades of authority that are closely geared to meeting the actual service requirements. Direct superiors have the most far-reaching powers and authorities:

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[12]   See, amongst other things, the USSR Field Service Regulation, which can be accessed in relevant Bundeswehr libraries such as those of the Military History Research Institute and the Führungsakademie in Hamburg.

> "Personnel who command a military unit, from regiment/battalion level down to lower than company level, or head a military agency have the general authority to give orders to any personnel subordinate to him/her both on and off duty." (BMVg 1956: I, Art. I)

The authority defined by this legal rule seems to be unrestricted at first. Two sections of the Military Personnel Act, however, define appropriate limits. Section 10, which specifies a superior's duties, states that superiors may only "issue orders that serve an official purpose and comply with international law, national law and service regulations." The second limit, which is more specifically applicable to subordinate personnel, is defined by Section 11, which governs the duty of obedience:

> "Soldiers must obey their superiors. They must make every possible effort to follow their orders fully, conscientiously and promptly. lt is not deemed disobedience to ignore an order which violates human dignity or is not given for service-related purposes."

The Act further states: "An order must be ignored if following it would constitute a criminal offence." Despite these clear guidelines, the fact remains that the authority and influence of superiors in the military, particularly direct superiors, are considerably more far-reaching than the powers of those of superiors in civilian organisations.

3.2. How is Leadership and Obedience Viewed in the Bundeswehr Itself?

Like all organisations, the armed forces have an array of oral and written statements, which not only have a concrete and evident meaning, but also possess a programmatic dimension focused on self-understanding. As a consequence, every organisation "develops ideologies and cultural discourses that indicate the values any action should be based on as well as the objectives that have to be achieved." (Bonazzi, Tacke 2008: 321) In the military, these ideologies and discourses can be found in regulations, specialist literature, and, outside Germany, in military magazines, where leadership and military leaders are very highly regarded. In the following, some examples will be given to show how leadership and leaders are characterised in the command regulations of the German Army and how they are described as they should ideally be (for more details, see Keller 2000).

According to these regulations, military command is first and foremost: "an art, a creative activity based on character, ability, and mental power. Its tenets cannot be described exhaustively. It is neither compatible with formulas nor with rigid regulations, but every military leader has to be guided by clear principles." (BMVg 2007: No. 1003) The regulations, thus, declare the leader to be an artist of character. Interestingly, a similar passage was presented much more soberly in the Reichswehr regulation of 1933/1934, which states: "Warfare is an art, a scientifically based, free and creative activity. It places the most enormous demands on the personality." (Der Chef der Heeresleitung 1933: No. 1) The Bundeswehr has replaced the scientific foundation of leadership with the personality of the leader to accord with the above presented trait approach, which seeks to identify the Great Man and successful leader on the basis of personality traits. An entire chapter of the current regulation, entitled "Soldatisches Führen" (Military Leadership), also follows this logic as it describes the leader's personality by means of an extensive catalogue of virtues:

> "The personality of military leaders, combined with the espirit de corps, is critical for success. Their exemplary attitudes, abilities and performance shape the units subordinate to them." (BMVg 2007: No. 3013)

The regulation continues by saying that

> "military missions, especially combat missions, push people to the limits of mental and physical endurance. That is why during actual missions character traits are often more relevant than intellectual capabilities; many persons, who had previously been in the back seat, step to the fore during military missions." (*ibid.*: No. 3001)

Later the regulation says:

> "Trust is gained by leading with heart and mind. Trust between leaders and the personnel they lead is the prerequisite for any success and the basis for cohesion in danger and distress. Leaders gain the loyalty of the personnel entrusted to them by being both dominant and moderate, just and patient, by taking care of their subordinates and placing their trust in them, and by always staying authentic and faithful to themselves." *(ibid.*: No. 3018)

And: "Military personnel want to see, hear and feel the presence of their leaders – particularly their direct superiors." (*ibid.*: No. 3020)

The general points made about military leaders in this regulation primarily seem to refer to the battlefield, where personal leadership is a critical aspect

of the commanders of the lowest hierarchic levels. However, when taking a closer look at the regulation's statements on provisions and procedures, it quickly makes one realize that they were written with other, higher levels of command in mind – those levels at which leadership tends to be determined by leadership substitutes, process flows and incentive systems. As a consequence, these descriptions of military leaders have no regulatory substance anymore; they have become nothing more than autodescriptions and auto-reassurances, and the superiors become characterized in that way over their subordinates only by default and by virtue of their position.

In addition, the regulation clearly mirrors the above-described focus on the will of the superior commanders and the strict hierarchy. For example, it says that "during missions, there can only be one leader" (*ibid*.: No. 2012). This notion is presented even more clearly in the paragraph before:

> "Full responsibility is expressed by the leader's personal responsibility for accomplishing the mission assigned to him/her. Only so will both the uniformity of all measures be guaranteed and will it be ensured that the leaders' will rapidly reach any subordinate personnel." (*ibid*.: No. 2011)

At the same time, a relatively long passage deals with mission-type leadership. It becomes clear that the purpose of these mission-type tactics is to precisely ensure that the flexibility required for taking action in a chaotic environment will be maintained within the hierarchy:

> "Military leaders grant subordinate leaders more freedom in conducting their mission. This freedom is required for quick and determined action and serves to increase the subordinates' own responsibility. Subordinate leaders are thus enabled to act on their own in accordance with common interests to immediately respond to situational developments and to seize a favourable moment for their action." (*ibid*.: No. 2006)

To prevent this freedom from becoming a destabilizing factor, unified thinking and action is required for mission-type leadership and success (cf. *ibid*.: No. 2014).

This brief insight into a small part of the military reality within the Bundeswehr was intended to illustrate that this aspect of the military, which in Germany has thus far been the object of little scientific research, offers exciting fields of analysis, which – as rudimentarily shown in this article – are well-suited to being investigated by organisational-sociological theories and methods. Furthermore, it might also be possible to utilize other sociological approaches to the phenomenon of leadership in the German military. It

must, however, be mentioned that the Bundeswehr – just like forces of other countries – cannot be researched freely. Every empirical study that is to be conducted within this organisation needs approval from the Federal Ministry of Defence. This is an obstacle that might explain the scarcity of scientific findings on a topic that is so important for an understanding of the military.

4. Conclusion and Outlook

As outlined above, military leadership is, to a great extent, similar to leadership in civilian bureaucratic organisations and can be described using the same theoretical approaches. Its special character is particularly manifest when force is applied in direct combat with an enemy. The subsequently developing chaotic environment requires special control methods, such as the "steamroller strategy" or "mission-type tactics". Such contingencies also impact the armed forces' organisation culture, which is reflected by the description of a military leader in the regulations of the German Army. These regulations suggest that the principles of combat at the lowest level of command are equivalent to the doctrine of higher commands. Because its design principles, however, also result in the military resembling a total institution as developed by Goffman, the civilian and political side attaches great importance to controlling the power of the military command. The legal regulations governing the processes of issuing and obeying orders have been described to show how this control is ensured even at the Bundeswehr's lowest level of command.

Military leadership is an extremely exciting field of research that, even though largely ignored in Germany, directly shows how the military thinks and works. From an organisational-sociological perspective, all relevant theoretical approaches generally appear to be suitable for anyone wishing to remedy the lack of research on the phenomenon of military leadership. As the military has a clear structure, it might, however, be expedient to use the classical system theory, which, for instance, was developed in the works of Talcott Pearsons (1964). As shown by the cited definition from Hill *et al.* (1981), this theory allows the researcher to identify and describe functions and roles of organisational elements and leaders. Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems (2010) seems to be another suitable approach, as it allows for actions in complex environments to be described by means of the concepts of "decision" and "contingency" (cf. also Luhmann 2006). Michel Crozier's (1979) game theory in a bureaucratic system provides a wonderful context

for describing the behaviour of actors in organisations, particularly when it involves the struggle for power and the influence over staff members. In addition, leadership and command decisions lend themselves to interesting examinations by utilizing the phenomenon of bounded rationality, as developed by Simon, March and Cyert in the behavioural-scientific decision theory field (Simon 1979). The concept of neo-institutionalism (Meyer, Rowan 1977), in turn, provides concise answers to questions as to why organisations and their leaders take specific decisions that might prompt outside observers to shake their heads in disbelief.[13] Pierre Bourdieu's (2010) habitus concept is well-suited to describe and classify leaders of an organisation and to compare them to other groups within and outside the organisation. Last but not least, one should mention the different concepts of organisation culture, which serve to precisely comprehend the particularities of leaders and leadership in a military organisation.[14]

This list of sources is nowhere exhaustive. It is rather intended to provide guidance on how to approach the phenomenon of Bundeswehr leaders and leadership from a sociological perspective. Even though the military is not always open to scientific research, addressing issues of military leadership more extensively in the future is not only desirable and promising, but also a necessity if one is to obtain both scientific findings and to increase the reflexivity of the military organisation.

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[13] Also see the articles by **Elbe & Richter** in **Leonhard, Werkner** 2012.

[14] Also see the article "Militärische Kultur" by **vom Hagen** & **Tomforde** in **Leonhard, Werkner** 2012.

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