

Original article

Command – leadership in conditions of a military service

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ABSTRACT

The authors of this article deal with questions concerning command and/or leadership in military service conditions. Based on the analysis of the reference literature and their own reflections, they define the notions of command and leadership, pointing to differences and similarities. In addition, they try to answer the questions of whether students of military universities are being educated towards leadership or to become leaders? And, whether in the practice of military service, we encounter command or leadership, and why?

KEYWORDS

command, leadership, military service, power, influence

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Introduction

In social life, at every level, we command – we lead and, at the same time, we surrender to the power of a leader. However, command is usually associated with a military service or uniformed services. Since the earliest times adepts of martial arts have been learning the rules of command by putting them into action on battlefields. They are currently doing so by gaining comprehensive knowledge at military universities and experience during internships at training centres and military units. In order to become a commander, one must acquire and demonstrate certain knowledge, expertise and aptitude not only in the area of command but also in the area of leadership.

Command – leadership as a management skill is not innate. Command or leadership principles, styles and ways to influence other people can be learned. The same way as you can learn to become a doctor, an artist or an economist. However, to become an exceptional leader or an outstanding doctor, artist, or sportsman, it is not enough to have a diploma from a university, even a renowned one. In order to achieve the highest level of excellence, it is necessary to have a talent in this area – a kind of aptitude.

However, predispositions, similarly to circumstances (difficult situations, threatening situations), are not determinants that ultimately prove the “greatness” of a leader. Circumstances are only the basis on which leaders grow up, an opportunity in historical censorship to reveal

their leadership talents. The confirmation of this thesis is the fact, that scientists who carried out research on leadership for tens of years were unable to outline a consistent catalogue of attributes of a perfect leader. In spite of many studies and historical analyses it is impossible to define the most important character traits of eminent leaders and to identify the most effective ways in which such people operate. What distinguishes all the great leaders, according to John Kenneth Galbraith, "...is the will to face firmly the most important concerns of people in their time" [1, p. 327].

Such a situation, however, has a positive impact on the idea of leadership, creating a basis for natural leaders to reveal at the right time, place and situation. If, however, a model leadership style could be created, it would mean abandoning its authenticity. It can be presumed that all efforts would be focused on shaping the desired qualities, knowledge and skills on the basis of a leadership model. However, it is different, "...leadership has many faces. You cannot imitate someone else; you must be yourself" [2, p. 12]. In addition, leadership is relative and depends on where and when we act. You can have very high causative energy in a given situation, sector of activity or speciality, and proportionally negligible in other areas of life.

The purpose of this work is to seek answers to the following questions: What similarities and differences exist in the definition of command and leadership? Do military colleges create leaders or do they educate them towards leadership? Do we encounter command or leadership in military service, and why?

1. Command, leadership – interpretation of concepts

Command – leadership, as a kind of management of subordinate warriors, has been known since the times of organized expeditions (wars) of temporary units, which most often were dissolved after completion. It was understood that the conducted warfare could not be carried out spontaneously, and the actions of warriors on the battlefield should be directed by the commander. Commanders of tribal or ancestral clans or people who stood out from other warriors, who were physically fit, resolute and brave, experienced in battle, cunning and ruthless, were the most common leaders of expeditions. They had both, physical and mental qualities that predisposed them to command subordinate warriors on the battlefield.

In this brief introduction, we recall such phrases as command, leadership. It should be stressed, however, that command, ways of commanding (directing) soldiers on the battlefield, from the beginning of the formation of military structures have been subject to permanent transformations. From a self-proclaimed warlord – a leader, through a commander educated in his craft, with staff and formal authority, to a comprehensively educated commander, with a staff of specialists, formal authority, but also, or perhaps above all, power based on his internal (personal) authority.

According to the army's Rules of Procedure for Land Forces, command is "the process by which a commander imposes his will and intentions on his subordinates, and by which, assisted by his staff, he plans, organises, coordinates and directs the activities of subordinate forces by using standard operating procedures and all available means of communication" [3, p. 271, 407]. From the quoted definition it follows that command includes power and responsibility of the superior for issuing orders to subordinates. Therefore, power associated with the right to give orders, but also to bear full responsibility for their consequences. The scope of this power varies and depends on the position taken and the situation. Command

is also perceived as a process, because the commander supported by the staff carries out activities related to planning, organizing, directing and coordinating the subordinate forces [4, p. 11-17]. This interpretation shows that command is unambiguously connected with the person of the commander – with a soldier (officer, sergeant, non-commissioned officer) formally appointed to a managerial post, who has the right to command subordinates [3, p. 407].

Commanding, leading as a social process is one of the oldest and at the same time a natural human activity. It's been about 600 BC. when a Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu wrote: "If a commander is wise, he can respond to changing conditions. If he is honest, his soldiers have no trouble understanding his intentions and are not afraid. If he is humanitarian, he loves people, he can feel compassion for others, he takes care of their interests and armament. If he is brave, he wins, breaking the enemy's resistance without hesitation. If he is demanding, his troops are disciplined because they feel respect for him" [5, p. 15].

If command is associated with power and forcing one's will by the commander, then leadership, according to Joanna Ciulla, "...is a complex, moral relationship between people, based on trust, commitment, involvement, emotion and a shared vision of best interest"[6]. In the Little Encyclopedia of Political Knowledge we can read that "the basic condition for leadership is the ability to exert such influence on others that they voluntarily submit to the authority of a leader" [7, p. 248]. Leadership is also associated with power, but usually with motivating, inspiring power, not subjugating, limiting one. Leadership is a social construct, a leader (his rank, greatness) is revealed as a consequence of social expectations of a given group in a specific time, culture and situation.

Leadership can be seen as a process and as a feature. As a process, it consists in an unforced orientation and coordination of the team members' activities. It also consists in a skilful passing on of intellectual and moral power to subordinates. The power needed to effectively implement the commonly agreed objectives. Max Weber called this predisposition charisma, while Gustav Le Bon described it as "a secret force", "an almost magnetic spell" [8, p. 121, 134]. As a feature, it is a component of predispositions assigned to those who use them successfully in influencing other team members. These are, among other things, full self-confidence and confidence in the people they lead as well as faith in their ability to overcome difficulties, no matter how big they are. Because faith and acceptance of subordinates are the source of motivation to act.

In addition, in contrast to command, leadership does not use instructions, orders, demands, commands or fears. In leadership, all the more so in authentic (natural) leadership, one does not expect submission, acceptance of authority, does not force one to adapt to the behaviour of the leader. It is more about dialogue, commitment, empathy, identification, reciprocity and responsibility. The leader does not control, punish, degrade or consciously impose domination. On the other hand, it suggests, recommends, indicates, encourages, instructs, motivates. A leader is able to build people's passion and determination through his authentic commitment, realism and faith in what he does. Leaders are aware of the fact that the strength of their authority does not depend on the efficient and criminal forcing of obedience, but on the magnitude of social acceptance [9, p. 170].

Leadership is not, therefore, the exercise of power in the traditional sense of the word. But just like power, it is relational, target-oriented and goal-oriented. It is therefore a relationship between persons and, in this sense, its dimension is of the man's ethical behaviour

[10, p. 86-7]. It is the ethical attitude of a leader that is the source, first to serve and then to direct others. It also contributes to natural leadership. It should be noted that a leader is fundamentally different from a person who primarily wants to command in order to realise his own benefits, no matter how we understand those benefits.

2. Education of leaders or education towards leadership

Military universities, whose primary task is to educate adepts of war craft, future commanders, in their academic programs also include subjects related to leadership. Leadership analyzed from the perspective of the rich achievements of various scientific disciplines. Such an approach should be considered reasonable, provided that the completion of a leadership course does not make its graduates leaders. Although leadership requires the consolidation of specific knowledge and skills, it is not a skill in itself. Whereas, it is a complex predisposition of a man, conditioned by many determinants – not only knowledge and skills. Leadership in its conceptual complexity is more about initiative, perspective, imagination, morals, humility, wellbeing, etc., and therefore it is about the factors needed to understand people and perceive changes in the social environment. In this context, education, multilateral education, provides a basis for understanding the idea of leadership and knowledge about life in modern society. An interdisciplinary approach in the educational process creates an opportunity for in-depth reflection on the richness of human existence and problems, and this reflects in the perception of leadership and assessment of leaders [11].

Leadership is a collection of predispositions, knowledge, skills and experience that are subject to the same rules of learning as any other disposition. They can be developed, modified and shaped. As it has already been mentioned, aptitudes are an obvious asset, as other skills, but not the only determinant of winning people over and being a leader. Military universities, on the other hand, are a place of acquiring not only textbook and specialist knowledge, but above all, they are a place where time is devoted to educating the mind and the ability to think independently and manage subordinates effectively. Candidates for officers gain knowledge at the university, but they also learn how to use it effectively in specific situations. As knowledge itself has little causal power when used inadequately to the situation. In command practice, skillful use of knowledge and acquired skills gives superiors a significant advantage over subordinates in terms of credibility, respect, trust and impact on them [12, p. 38-9, 59]. The basis for shaping and developing leadership competences in military universities is an extensive didactic and educational system, adapted and resulting from the organisational needs of the modern army of a democratic state.

However, it should be considered that people are equal by nature, but from a social, cultural and emotional point of view they are diverse. In reality, their future is shaped differently, some become leaders, others subordinate to leadership. Cultural norms and values derived from the social environment of those in military service also influence the way of command – leadership, the relationship between superior – subordinate and vice versa, but also the ability to learn (shape) leadership competences. For these reasons, but also for formal and criterion reasons, one cannot learn how to become a leader. As it was not possible to identify the criteria which, if met, would formally name a person a leader. Also having at least such attributes as emotional intelligence, courage, self-confidence, cunningness, or other, is not sufficient criteria for naming this person a leader. Because many people reveal these qualities,

which does not mean that they are considered leaders. In turn, it is possible and to a large extent this can be done at military universities while teaching candidates for officers, how to command subordinates and how to do it effectively with their approval.

3. Command or leadership in the army?

A commander shall be appointed and assigned to a specific post with a scope of rights and duties. A leader, however, cannot be appointed, and he emerges from among the members of the group as a leader, a guide. It is around him that other members of the group focus and submit to his authority. As Bogdan Szulc rightly pointed out, “One becomes a commander by the appointment of superiors, while a leader by the acceptance of the subordinates” [13, p. 211]. The fact is that for people in uniforms the idea of leadership is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Polish army. In the country, from a historical perspective, there were many leaders of clear charisma in the Weber’s sense. However, in practice of daily military service, the situation has not been and is not so obvious and rather deviates from the desired state – the vision of a genuine leadership.

The path from a formal supervisor (commander) to a leader, recognized by his subordinates is a path of pursuing common for the commander and his subordinates goals, a path to achieve continuous mutual trust [14]. Pursuing common goals, as the stimulus that motivates people to the highest extent, is the sense of individual contribution to the achievement of the set goal. When considering such conditions, the commander is seen not so much as a superior, but as an example to follow, as a guide for subordinates in their pursuit of a common goal. A commander, by virtue of his position, has the power appropriate thereto, and the formal authority associated therewith. But the power resulting from the function and the authority associated therewith are not sufficient to assume the role of a leader. The power of exerting influence by a commander does not depend on the power he exercises due to the position he holds, nor on the formal authority resulting from that position. It can be said that the greater the authority, including internal authority, of a commander, the less coercion he uses in the exercise of power. Therefore, a sign of equality between command and leadership in military service conditions can only be made in relation to commanders who prefer personal emotional relationships between the superior and subordinates. To commanders, whose authority, including liberating not subjugating one, dominates in exercising power over their subordinates [15]. Is such an arrangement possible in the army, where social relations, organizational roles of team members are defined and determined by a highly hierarchical organizational structure? Where do the invariable rules of service and allocation of powers to set tasks and orders apply?

Such relations are possible, but unrealistic because the specificity of vertical advancement in the army was based on and still consists in a permanent change of social relations in a given environment. Change supported by extended powers and the resulting prestige. A prestige that can be reduced to two basic forms, acquired prestige and personal prestige. The acquired prestige has its source in the function, position and military rank. Personal prestige is something individual, it can coexist with the acquired prestige. It can also increase in power thanks to it, but it can also perfectly exist independently. Each person, especially a person in a uniform, thanks to the position held and the function, enjoys a certain prestige. Most often, at the moment of taking up a relatively high position (function). However, over time, this prestige

decreases, remains at the same level or increases. These fluctuations depend on the personal prestige of a person. Personal prestige does not depend on position or power – prestige itself is power [8, p. 133]. However, in the practice of command, the social distance between the commander and his subordinates does not necessarily result from the authority of knowledge, experience, emotional competences (personal prestige), but rather from a predetermined difference – the format of power (acquired prestige). Moreover, the hierarchical structure of the army, in which the existing formations have pre-established rules of operation, does not allow commanders for a wide range of freedom in choosing effective styles of command.

Another problem of the army is the mental sphere of commanders, passed from a generation to generation. It seems that changes in the mentality of functionaries do not keep pace with the progress of knowledge and the resulting desirable rules of command and leadership. The style of command in the Polish army is still dominated by the principle of giving instructions. In assigning tasks to subordinates, too little importance is attached to the definition of the purpose of the activity, and proportionally too much to instructing subordinates how to carry out the task. Practicing such a way of dealing with subordinates guarantees correct performance of the task, but limits the initiative and creative approach to its execution. It gives superiors a sense of well-fulfilled duty; satisfaction with the level of training and discipline of subordinates, but does not teach them independence of action, responsibility, and has little to do with leadership principles.

Despite many positive changes in the relationship between a superior and a subordinate, obedience and impeccable execution of orders from superiors remain the basic determinant of success in military service. They often decide about professional advancement, not nobility of character or personal prestige. But exposing obedience and performance is not conducive to shaping leaders and commanders with vision, flexible and courageous in solving tasks. In the army, almost every commander has a double role: that of a superior and a subordinate. This duality of roles manifests itself in specific interpersonal relationships that may facilitate or hinder (as we have already mentioned) the application of the leadership principles. In the system of vertical dependence, commanders often take over the command styles practiced by a superior. Therefore, when a commander standing higher in the hierarchy treats subordinates instrumentally – as executors, he does not let them experience his own value. He makes it clear, that he is the only one who knows best and is the leading person in this organization. However, assuming that in the army structure, the management of subordinates should be based on leadership, every commander, starting with the platoon commander and above, should be the leader of the leaders.

Conclusions

The need for military leadership is recognised and accepted. However, many questions arise, such as: is natural military leadership possible? Can commanders become leaders in an army where formal ties prevail over personal relationships? Are there conditions for commanders to become leaders in a centralised institution with a hierarchical structure? These are questions that are difficult to find an unambiguous and accurate answer to, as we tried to demonstrate in our deliberations.

The army, despite its resignation from basic service in 2010, is an organization that brings together in its ranks people who differ in many ways. What unites the soldiers of the Polish

army, what is a common goal, is service to maintain the safety of the Poles, service in the sense of responsibility for the Homeland. Moreover, persons currently performing military service are professional soldiers who, unlike the soldiers of the compulsory service, perform it by choice. These arguments, plus the commanders' knowledge of management, emotional intelligence, motivation, interpersonal communication, create more and more opportunities to use leadership authority when leading subordinates. For in leadership, contrary to command, an important contribution is the creation of friendly relations between superiors and subordinates.

Nevertheless, the basic form of leading soldiers in the army has always been, is and will probably be one-man command. Leadership, in our opinion, is a category that supports and complements the process of command. Since leadership in its full sense is difficult to achieve. The military is an organisation based on continuity of one-man command, on readiness for action at any time. There is no time, no situation and perhaps no need for genuine leaders to reveal themselves. It is hard not to agree with the thesis adopted by Andrzej Koźmiński, that in order to speak of leadership "...the need and the person to whom a sufficiently large and important group attributes (rightly or wrongly) the ability to satisfy this need, must appear at the same time" [16, p. 62]. Therefore, circumstances and situations are the right place to reveal leadership talents.

However, the knowledge of leadership, especially among the present commanders in the rank of officers, is incomparably greater than the one of their former commanders. But, the knowledge alone is not a sufficient argument for proclaiming oneself a leader. It should be stressed, however, that in the army – perhaps because of the acquired knowledge – quite often the term "leadership" is used instead of "command". It is good that almost everyone wants to lead, but one should be careful that the common understanding of leadership does not result in a shallowing of its original essence. Because not every command is the same as leadership, just as not every commander can aspire to be a leader. In our opinion, leaders have a chance to become those commanders who can reconcile a strong style of command with a human approach to subordinates. The maturity of a commander, his leadership talent, is evidenced to a large extent by his tendency to focus on people, not on tasks, and his ability to curb the insatiable lust for power. Symptoms of leadership also include refraining from deciding on everything and for everyone.

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Conflict of interests

All authors declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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Biographical note

Ryszard Kałużny – Dr hab., professor at MULF. Between 2007-2016, he worked as an academic professor at the Lower Silesian University in Wrocław. In 2016-2017, he served as the Deputy Dean for Scientific Research at the Faculty of Management of the Military University of Land Forces. His research interests focuses on issues related to preparing a human being for action (behaviour) in situations of external threats; interpersonal safety; human activity as a determinant of their development. He authored over 100 scientific publications on security and leadership, including 3 monographs and numerous research projects.

Piotr Pietrakowski – Dr., obtained a PhD in social sciences in 2013 at the University of Wrocław. In 2018 he received the second degree award of the Rector–Commander of the MULF for his cooperation with the Territorial Defence Force Armies and for shaping leadership competences in the academic year 2017/18; he also received the following honours: Afghanistan Campaign Medal from the Commander of the Combined Forces, 2006; Star of Afghanistan from the President of the Republic of Poland for participating in Operation Enduring Freedom – 2009; Medal of the Commander of the Combined Forces – ISAF, 2011; Army Commendation Medal from the Department of the US Army for merits while serving within the international Operation Enduring Freedom, 2012; Star of Afghanistan from the President of the Republic of Poland for participating in ISAF Operation – 2015. Since 2016 he has been the Head of the Leadership Department at the Military Academy of Land Forces. The author of 30 publications on security and leadership.

Dowodzenie – przewodzenie w warunkach służby wojskowej

STRESZCZENIE

Autorzy w artykule podejmują kwestie dotyczące dowodzenia i/lub przewodzenia w warunkach służby wojskowej. Na podstawie analizy literatury przedmiotu oraz własnych refleksji definiują pojęcie dowodzenia i przewodzenia, wskazując na różnice i podobieństwa. Ponadto podejmują próbę odpowiedzi na pytania, czy w uczelniach wojskowych kształcą się przywódców, czy w kierunku przywództwa? Oraz, czy w praktyce służby wojskowej spotykamy się z dowodzeniem, czy przewodzeniem i dlaczego?

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

dowodzenie, przewodzenie, służba wojskowa, władza, wywieranie wpływu

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