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Exploratory Study upon Military Leadership in the 21st Century. What Are Skills and Knowledge Required for Leadership Success?

Abstract: Within the context of increasingly digital work, it appeared interesting to look at how military leaders and their leadership style will have to adapt to remain “up-to-speed” with current challenges. It is qualitative research based on interviews with military and civilian experts. Four interviews have been conducted, but there would be the potential to interview many more experts and look deeper into the matter. Within the context of digitalised military leadership, the importance of communication and mutual trust has been underscored by the experts. They agreed that leaders nowadays must embrace digital developments and include them in their leadership styles. The civilian world can learn from the military when it comes to leadership approaches, which is happening at the time of publication of this article with practical examples (senior military leaders assigned to lead the pandemic task force in some countries). Overall, the outcome of the research is that a relevant and resilient military leadership style in the 21st century resembles the elements of the situational leadership style developed by Hersey-Blanchard.

Keywords: *leadership, military, digital transformation, civilian*

Introduction

Problem, Theoretical Background, Research Question

Digital transformation is undoubtedly an ever-present subject in the 21st century and a matter which needs to be addressed by all institutions. As written in one of the sources, through digital transformation, companies are forced to re-evaluate their business model in terms of the value and role of data (Abbu et al., 2020). Researchers point out that it is important to not just do something for the sake of doing it. You have to have a digitalisation plan

(Dignen, 2021). There are multiple opinions when it comes to what it takes nowadays to be a leader. Some researchers like Hussain and Hassan (2015) argue that a leader's success depends upon core traits like having a vision, being a role model and setting goals. An interesting point included by these researchers when it comes to comparing the civilian and military environment is that of 43 US Presidents (at the time), 32 (76%) have had a military background, and the huge majority became successful presidents (Hussain & Hassan, 2015). Digitalisation being a global phenomenon, researchers see it as imperative that companies are active international, if not global, if they do not want to jeopardise their success (Rüth & Netzer, 2019). The current pandemic has accelerated digital transformation and forced everyone to centre their activities at home (Saputra et al., 2021).

The research question is: What is the profile of a capable military leader in a digital connotated 21st century regarding skills and leadership style, and what can the civilian world perhaps learn from the military?

Course of the Research

At the start, the author conducted a literature review to specify the research topic, define relevant questions to be addressed and map out the way ahead. The questions used during the research (see Appendix) have been derived from analysing relevant literature (see publications) and, in the case of the practical example, derived from general news. Several of the points have been reappearing in various sources. Therefore, the author deemed it relevant to form questions from those points. The actual expert interviews followed it. Given the limited number of interviews possible (see point 'limitations'), the experts have been selected in order to have two civilians from the military world on two very senior (3*) General officers in order to shed some light on the military aspects of leadership, but also organisational advancement at the same time. Details about the experts can be found in the Appendix. Each of the interviews was transcribed and checked with the respective expert. Using the inductive method, the text was analysed with the software 'f4analyse', put into the pre-derived sensical categories, paraphrased, and added to the draft file. The broad categories (see 'Methods') have been derived from the analysed literature and adjusted as deemed sensible (adding sub-categories) given the returns from the experts with a focus on a) skills needed by a military leader in the 21st century, b) in the digital context and c) what the civilian world might be able to learn from them (practical example). In the end, the final draft was verified with all experts via the so-called "communicative validation".

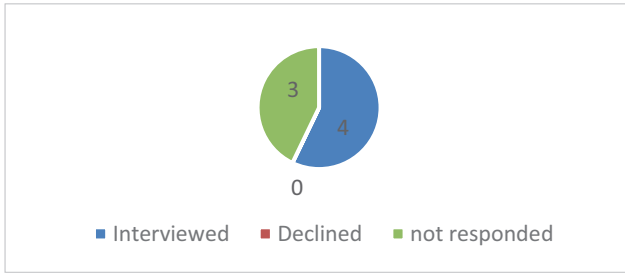


Figure 1. Returns from the contacted experts
Source: own creation.

Method

This research was a qualitative research based on expert interviews. Theoretical considerations and key theories from literature can be found in chapter 2, and all empirical findings and analysis can be found in chapter 3 onwards, where the author puts the information received from the experts into categories (displayed in figure 2). It was aimed here to have a very flexible approach, meaning that the overall structure of the paper was consistently adapted to sharpen the key messages, meaning overall, the analysis approach was a mix of inductive and deductive analysis. Within the context of University rules, the guidelines from the document “FOM regulations for a formal design of scientific seminar – and graduation papers”, May 2021 have been used.

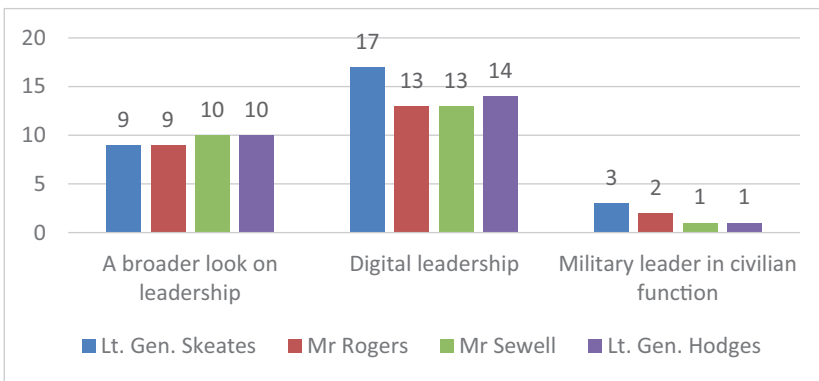


Figure 2. Category system and number of statements used per expert
Source: own creation.

Limitations

This research has been developed within the framework of the FOM University, Germany. The rules for such papers limit them to four thousand words. Based on this limit, the author could not interview more than four experts and stay within the 4000 words boundaries.

Theoretical Considerations

Key Points from the Literature

In the following five sub-chapters, the author will cover key findings from the literature and key aspects of the research question at hand. In the literature, one can find numerous leadership styles, depending on many surrounding factors. Kacala defines leadership (Kanarski et al., 1998; as cited in Kacala, 2015) as a skill or ability to influence people or win followers and create a vision of encouraging & developing active people (Kacala, 2015). Another interesting definition utilised by the Canadian Armed Forces is that leadership influences others by direct or indirect means through personal attributes or formal authority to act by a shared purpose or intent (Malinowski, 2015). Hussain & Hassan (2015) promote the situational leadership style of Hersey-Blanchard, after which a leader changes the style based upon the details of the task at hand and the group's performance level. Furthermore, they mention the Transformational Leadership Model from Bass, which aims to raise the subordinates' level of performance by having challenging expectations. The importance of considering technological development is underlined by Allen et al. (2021), stating that the future defence of Europe will not be possible without investments in technology and having an AI-enabled (but not AI only) defence strategy. The author looks at it in the empirical part of the paper. Prof. Neeley states that technology must not be mistaken as a substitute for executing leadership (Neeley, 2021). Furthermore, more companies are considering remaining in a flexible (digital & presence) work model after the COVID-19 pandemic (Arneson, 2021).

Evolution of Leadership Theories

One of the oldest approaches to leadership is the skill-based approach, first reviewed by Katz (1955), which advocated three types of necessary skills to be a good leader (technical skills, human skills and conceptual skills (M. Megheirkouni & A. Mejheirkouni, 2019).

More recently, in the 1970s, there was the development of three leadership theories, among other styles, which are still considered truly relevant nowadays and which have been researched and further developed intensively.

The first one to be considered is the "Situational leadership theory" by Hersey & Blanchard. It is a rather adaptive style, which means the leader changes the style depending on the maturity of the subordinates, which defines what style (telling, delegating, participating and selling) is to be used and the chances of success (Hersey & Blanchard, 1979). If done correctly, the leader will help the subordinates to mature (Hersey & Blanchard, 1979).

The second is B.M. Bass' "transformational leadership model". Within this are four elements: idealised influence, intellectual stimulation, consideration of the individual, and inspiration (Hussain & Hassan, 2015). This model talks about a system with challenging expectations for subordinates to increase their performance level (Hussain & Hassan, 2015).

Looking at the respective elements, inspirational motivation means to get the employee to comprehend the background of the work, idealised influence means displaying respect and trust by personal example, and consideration of the individual means one is to take on board the needs of employees for decisions and to help them grow. Intellectual stimulation aims to support innovation in the workplace (Šimanauskienė et al., 2021).

The third theory is the “Servant leadership theory” after Greenleaf in 1977. He sees servant leadership as not just only managing. For him, it is also a way of life (the leader is a servant before anything else) (Greenleaf, 1977; as cited in Fotso, 2021). According to this, the skills of a servant leader are tolerance & empathy, a step-by-step approach and good oral skills (Greenleaf, 1977; as cited in Fotso, 2021). For the bigger good of organisational effectiveness, virtue, morality and ethics are combined (Greenleaf, 1977; as cited in Fotso, 2021).

In the 21st century, there have been many attempts to produce a comprehensive leadership theory for the digital era. Solinger et al. (2020) advocate for the further development of the concept of moral leadership. The availability of new digital technologies drives innovation within digital leadership (Gierlich-Joas et al., 2020). Among the newest theories circulating is the global leadership theory, where leadership style is adapted to the local situation’s requirements (Turner & Baker, 2018). Abbu et al. (2020) established in their publication a link between the maturity and the planning of enterprises and their chances for success applying digital leadership (utilising digital tools for the success of the company). A definition for digital leadership given in the literature is to develop a comprehensive vision for digital transformation and be able to execute it (Larjovuori et al., 2016, as quoted in Zeike et al., 2019).

Leadership Challenges in a Digital Era

A leader in the digital age must take on board that younger employees are digital natives and have been brought up with digital tools (Kapucu, 2021). Another consideration for senior leadership is to see digital disruption as a chance to grow rather than a threat (Abbu et al., 2020). Leaders are to change the enterprise’s culture and the employees’ attitudes and behaviours (Abbu et al., 2020). If leaders do not address digitalisation appropriately, there is a good chance their company will be less competitive in the future (Zeike et al., 2019).

Differences in Leading in the Military vs the Civilian World

Recent research sees the evolution of military leadership from focusing on interpersonal relationships to including organisational culture and atmosphere at the workplace without intending to undermine the authority of the one in command (Malinowski, 2019). In the civilian environment, where success as an organisation is more about revenue, researchers argue enterprises who do not include digital transformation timely in their business plans will be less competitive in the market, and revenues will probably decrease (Abbu et al., 2020). To distinguish between a leader (more a military term) and a manager (civil-

ian term), Lewinska (2015) adds that a manager only coordinates his subordinates, while a leader has a feature of knowledge called “charisma”, being a powerful encouragement to follow the leader. The environment in which leadership occurs can be divided into low-intensity (structured tasks, stable environment, consequences of failure not severe) and high-intensity (unstructured tasks, severe consequences to failure, and rapidly changing environment) (Stone & Jawahar, 2021). In this context, the military environment is more often of a high-intensity nature than civilian ones (consequences of failure may lead to the death of people). Kacala (2015) adds here that military leadership happens in the “Operational Environment” (multidimensional and cyberspace), and the leader has to have the proper knowledge to come to the decisions. Both military and civilian leaders must be good at motivating subordinates (success in battle vs business success).

Using Digital Tools in Leading People

Implementing digital transformation enables leaders to make decisions based on a larger amount of available data (Kretschmer & Khashabi, 2020). Knowing digital tools and utilising them to communicate effectively is seen as a key to a successful digital transformation programme (Ramesh & Delen, 2021). The ability to drive innovation and apply new instruments and methods are key to digital leaders’ success (Abbu et al., 2020). A good leader ensures continuous exchange and cooperation between data analysts and decision-makers (Gaurav & Kongar, 2021).

A Broader Look at Leadership

Differences Between a Leader and a Manager

In the following chapters, the author will be going through the key points of the empirical returns of the interviews. The research gave the author reason to ask whether there is a difference between a “manager” and a “leader”. The graphics below are based on the interviews.

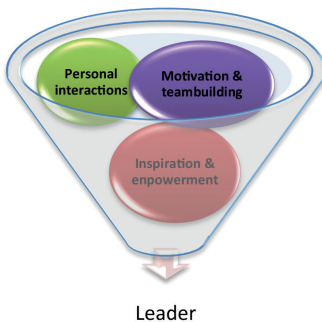


Figure 3. Defining a leader
Source: own creation

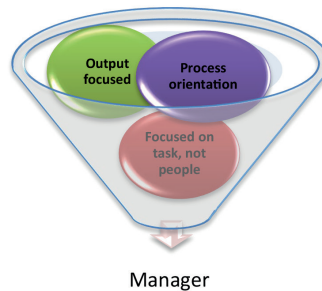


Figure 4. Defining a manager
Source: own creation

Leadership Theories

Being asked what they would consider the most appropriate leadership style in their area of expertise, the experts responded as follows:



Figure 5. Preferred leadership styles
Source: own creation.

Less surprisingly to the author, the opinions differed here as there are numerous theories out in the world, of which there are even additional variants. The key elements mentioned by the experts, irrespective of the leadership style preference, were that a leader a) has to keep the greater good of the enterprise in mind, b) has to be good at interacting with people, and c) has to be plausible to his audience and d) has to have realistic but high expectations. Being plausible/credible to your audience seems to be especially important here. You have to live and believe in your respective leadership style. People will notice if you try to utilise a leadership style contrary to your personality. Given what has been mentioned, it is important to state you may be successful in your leadership function by combining elements of different styles.

The Environment Where Leadership Happens

The interview partners supported the theory that the environment where leadership happens influences the type of leadership necessary. It was also recognised that leadership would be substantially different between a high-paced-environment and a slow-paced environment. The leader's communication style will need to be adjusted accordingly to ensure that the subordinates have received the message. As Mr Sewell pointed out, the stakes will be different if you work at a national Ministry of Defence or if you work at a smaller international headquarters. Especially in these multinational environments, leaders will need to take on the cultural differences of their teams to have good team cohesion. Lieutenant General (Lt. Gen.) Skeates explained that it is essential for him to have a clear division of tasks within a leadership team to shape the particular environment. Interaction (personally or virtually)

with all important stakeholders is the key. Without the establishment of mutual trust, making the correct leadership decisions is impossible. So, summing up the views expressed, a newly appointed leader should start his appointment by carefully analysing the environment (cohesion, pace, stakes associated with task etc.) to prevent early failures.

A Competent Leader in the 21st Century

Leadership Skills and Tools



Figure 6. The ideal 21st-century leader, according to the experts
Source: own creation.

For Lt. Gen. Skeates, the most important thing is to know and implement leadership skills and tools and live by them; meaning foremost, a leader must express authenticity. It also includes admitting if one does not have the answer to something. Besides that, emotional intelligence is important for him, connecting with the team on a personal level to understand “what drives them”. It starts by knowing yourself. Knowing your deficiencies will make you know how you have to develop in order to be a good leader. He also expressed that good communication is key to success as a leader. For Mr Rogers, leaders also need to have a generic and thorough understanding of the tasks and technologies available to complete them. They have to appreciate the growing complexity of the world, be able to deal with the pressure to reach business success and learn from the mistakes of failed organisations (e.g., start-ups crashing in their first year). Mr Sewell supported this view by expressing that

a leader needs to be aware of his environment. Furthermore, a leader needs to be capable of identifying and bringing the talents around him to effective use. He added that nowadays, a leader needs to base his decisions on facts (perhaps gathered by technology) rather than act on his “gut feeling”. For Lt. Gen. Hodges, a leader needs to be able to clearly express the goal to be accomplished by the team and ensure that he is understood. Furthermore, character (integrity & honesty) is important for a leader in his view.

Communication as Key to Success

For Lt. Gen. Skeates, communication has to be deep, and as a leader, you have to make sure that your message was received and understood to evade misunderstanding and problems. That being said, he advocated caution in selecting the right communication tool. Town Hall meetings as utilised in various companies may be a way to get many people together in the same room but comes with problems. As humans are social beings, they might refrain from asking critical questions about the message sent because they might be too shy to ask that in front of all their peers. The leader might walk away thinking his message was received while it was not. With not wishing to abandon such gatherings, Lt. Gen. Skeates advocated applying lessons learned from the pandemic and trying to engage in one-to-one interactions, perhaps digitally, with the people in their own environment, where they are comfortable, meaning a leader should use the power of technology to reach out and communicate in different ways. Overall, the importance of communication has been supported by all interview partners. Furthermore, Mr Rogers expressed that communication has not gotten easier due to the pandemic, as one cannot interpret body language or things like this so easy during an online conversation. Technology posed some limits to the effectiveness of communication. Mr Sewell added that internal and external communication is essential for success as a leader. One must be aware that communication happens on many levels, and there is a high potential of being misunderstood. It was supported by Lt. Gen. Hodges, who added that a leader would communicate with various audiences, including where he might not have authority (e.g., with suppliers). He added that in terms of language (e.g., different levels of proficiencies in English), one has to ensure that the message has been received. Furthermore, he advocated for a leader to have a key message, reuse it in different situations, and make one’s expression stronger.

Remote Leadership

During the interviews, remote leadership was evaluated positively by the interview partners. It works if the power dynamic is good and there is mutual trust. Lt. Gen. Skeates pointed out that it is beneficial for the employees as you can reach a healthier work-life balance like this. On the same note, he emphasises that it helps team members be on equal footing with their leaders regarding power dynamics. It was supported by Lt. Gen. Hodges, elaborating

on his practical experience as the Commander of US Army Europe. In his interactions with detached units (e.g., in Estonia), his subordinates expressed gratitude for the empowerment. He pointed out that remote leadership already exists in branches of the military (e.g., Navy), and senior leaders should trust their subordinates and their ability to apply skills and confidence in fulfilling the mission. Still, leading remotely takes some getting used to it. Mr Sewell elaborated here that from a cultural point of view, people try to arrange their remote working environment as much as possible, like in the office. As this depends on if you previously gathered experience working remotely, he suggested learning from those who have. At the same time, he emphasised that the amount of control and leadership applied entirely depends on the type of work performed. Lt. Gen. Skeates added that it is important to remember that humans are social beings, so physical proximity and presence in the same building are still important. All interview partners agreed that communication remotely is less clear and more challenging than face-to-face communication.

Transparency in Leading

While all interview partners agreed that transparency is easier to achieve when leading face to face, Lt. Gen. Skeates emphasised that you start building your transparency in personal interactions, and then you can follow up in virtual interactions. It is always important to ensure that your team knows the expected outcome of a task. For Mr Rogers, transparency can be seen as a realistic expression of end-state expectations and the associated timeline. An element of transparency in leading is to clearly explain new technology to everyone involved, particularly if future leadership interactions occur on this tool/platform. Lt. Gen. Hodges added here that an immensely powerful tool as a leader is to admit a mistake. Be transparent and open towards your team and encourage open exchange. Lt. Gen. Skeates agreed with this view, stating that being honest and open with subordinates is being transparent in leadership. As an organisation, it is especially important to be able to learn and adapt. A leader will always be closely observed by his subordinates, so it is essential to demonstrate integrity and work ethic.

Trial-and-Error Culture

The military has historically had some problems with establishing a trial-and-error culture. An often-expressed point of view is “We have always done it like this”, which, as Lt. Gen. Hodges expressed, is not very innovative. Lt. Gen. Skeates advocated establishing this in the military, knowing that in order to adapt and establish relevant new technologies, there will be errors and some money will be spent wrongly, but in the end, the results will be worth it, and the organisation will be more compatible as an outcome. Mr Sewell supported this view as he expressed that in terms of innovation, trial-and-error might be something relatively new but essential for the military. Mr Rogers gave an important point to consider.

If an organisation thinks about integrating a trial-and-error culture, there is a significant potential for frustration. He expressed that trial-and-error is not progressive improvement and to continually hand out technology which does not 100% work is not a proper change programme. There must be a balance between selecting a new tool and having the maturity to use/adopt it.

Digital Transformation and Change Programmes

Speaking of digital transformation, Mr Rogers emphasised that the associated change programme has to be planned throughout and a leader has to be selected carefully as otherwise, you might have a leader with a huge motivation vs an organisation which is resistant to change. It was already revealed in a change programme at IBM where people were killing themselves because of the hostile environment. In times of pandemics and long periods spent working from home, it is important not to draw the wrong conclusions. Some companies implemented strict monitoring programmes for their employees working from home, creating a hostile atmosphere like this and perhaps scaring away their critical talents. Mr Sewell advocated the possible dangers of technological advancements. As remote work tracking tools become increasingly sophisticated, leaders will be tempted to use them, even though they might be “morally questionable”. Mr Rogers further expressed that a good leader needs to know the next change/development. Digital transformation being a continuing development process, Mr Sewell thinks that technology has ways of uncovering aspects of leadership which we have not known before.

Military Leadership in Digital Times

Lt. Gen. Skeates underlined in his interview that it is essential for senior leaders in the military to know digitalisation and digital methodology. Technical expertise is equally important as other key skills like shooting and will become increasingly important. Mr Rogers underscored it by saying that technology will come to the workplace, and leaders must adjust. Lt. Gen. Hodges expressed that senior leaders do not need to be the leading expert in digital developments but need to have a generic understanding of things and know who the experts are around them. Do you have the correct experts for the task at hand, and are you using the technology correctly to accomplish your mission? He added here that if you are not keeping up with technological developments like drones and artificial intelligence, you will not be effective in performing your tasks. Also, older officers might still resist because their generation led over decades with no digital tools. Secure communication tools, artificial intelligence, big data and visualising complex issues are among the fields a military leader will need to have proficiency in. On a human level, networking is getting increasingly important, and a hierarchy has to be more flexible in digital times and quicker to communicate through. In the area of “fake news”, it is also increasingly important for

a military leader to be able to identify truths. Lt. Gen. Skeates added that the military has to try to learn from the civilian world and the dynamic of technological development. There is a need to clearly and realistically express the expectations associated with the various technologies used. The military must implement recent technical developments and, most importantly, trust that younger subordinates are by definition more technically affine and consider this when leading.

Practical Example (Military Officer in Civilian Leadership Function)

During the research, the author noticed a current leadership praxis example regarding what the civilian world can learn from the military in terms of leading others. Germany (Bateson, 2021) and other countries appointed a General as the head of their pandemic task force. Asking the experts about this somewhat curious usage of a military leader, they had a clear opinion on what countries are looking for in terms of leadership skills. Lt. Gen. Skeates expressed that one thing is the ability to clearly articulate a vision, understand the mission following a logical analysis, plan and weigh up options, and make clear recommendations. He underscored that such an assignment requires working with various departments/entities, and this is something military leaders are good at. In particular, General officers who have worked during their career in joint environments (composed of members of all services) will be able to positively use this experience in such assignments. Lt. Gen. Skeates added that this is perhaps something civilian leaders are lacking as they certainly are experts in their fields but are less comfortable with leading a cross-functional team. Another aspect for him is the ability to have the confidence to see things through and to work with uncertainties, as particularly the last point is something military leaders learn during their career. Mr Rogers agreed that the ability of a military leader to see the key aspects of a problem in a somewhat chaotic situation (having a “helicopter view” of the situation), to have the drive to accomplish a mission and solve the problem is what the countries are looking for. Also, he added that one has to keep in mind that military leaders are more trained in solving short-term problems and move to the next assignment afterwards. Mr Sewell argued that, in addition, military leaders are used to fulfil their assignment with not necessarily having all resources required, which is not something civilian leaders would be comfortable with. Lt. Gen. Hodges added that probably the military officer brings experience with large & complex organisations, overcoming bureaucratic inertia and the permanent need to build multi-faced teams under difficult circumstances.

Tying Back the Empirical Findings to the Theoretical Data

Following the previous chapters, the author will conclude the main part by briefly drawing some conclusions given the views expressed by the experts in combination with the points covered in the theoretical part. Technological advancement is irreversible and will play an

increasing role for any future leader, regardless of whether the leader works in the military or the civilian world. Any government/enterprise thinking it can neglect technological advancement will suffer the associated financial or security-political consequences. IT will be an increasingly important tool to support the execution of leadership. Putting the human interaction in the centre of leadership should never cease to be the underlying principle (mirroring what had been found in the literature). All experts agree upon the immense importance of communication as a leadership tool, especially if leading remotely, where there is a greater potential for misunderstandings. It means the research could confirm another important point of the literature review. There is no “one solution fits it all” in terms of leadership styles. One has to analyse the task at hand and adjust his style accordingly. Any leader in the 21st century has to be credible in terms of his work ethic and lead in a style they can fully embrace. Looking back at the literature research, it can be assessed that the interview findings point to the situational leadership style of Hersey-Blanchard as the most appropriate approach in the digital age of the 21st century. At the same time, there are merits to the other leadership theories visited in the theoretical part. Given the example in the last chapter, what can civilian leaders learn from the military? Military leaders may be more used to clearly articulate a vision after a thorough analysis, lead in a cross-functional environment, inspire confidence in their subordinates, identify the core of a problem in a “chaotic” situation, and accomplish a task with insufficient resources.

Conclusion

The research has been a small attempt to approach the immensely big subject of leadership styles in the digitalised 21st century, in this case, focusing on the military. Given the multitude of sources found by the author, this has an enormous potential to look deeper into the subject. It will be interesting to see whether the findings of this work will be conducted or not in future research. A multitude of sources means that there is a multitude of opinions, and there is no such thing as “the” leadership style of the digital 21st century. From a military point-of-view, it may be reiterated here that any future conflict will also occur in cyberspace, so embracing digital transformation and incorporating it into the respective leadership style is inevitable (know what your technology can do for you on the battlefield). While the civilian world might be somewhat more agile and quick in adapting to digital trends, especially in leadership, the military should draw inspiration from existing experiences in trends like remote work (e.g., in the Navy). In any organisation, be it civilian or military, the leaders have to do everything in their power to bend the mindset expressed in the phrase “We have always done it like that” if the respective organisation truly wishes to remain relevant in the 21st century. When looking back at the research process, the author has to state that it was challenging, enlightening, and remarkably interesting. In the context of the continuing development of one’s qualities as an academic researcher, it is welcome to have such an opportunity to conduct qualitative research.

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Appendix

Table 1. Experts interviewed

Name	Notable function
Lieutenant General Stuart Skeates CB OBE (GBR)	Former Commandant UK Royal Military Academy Sandhurst; UK Standing Joint Force Commander; Deputy Commander NATO Joint Force Command Brunssum, The Netherlands Leadership experience as a career military officer in senior positions of GBR military and joint multinational functions of NATO.
Mr Andrew Rogers (GBR)	Royal Navy engineer; business manager Defence General Munitions IPT; SHAPE & Brunssum NATO HQ military staff officer & process analyst in Integrated Advisory Team at NATO HQ Brunssum, The Netherlands Leadership experience as a career military officer in GBR Navy and joint functions within NATO, After retirement, analyst of processes in NATO HQ and involved in several digital modernisation programmes.
Mr Paul Sewell (GBR)	Senior NATO civilian; currently responsible for organisational development culture within Command Group of NATO Joint Warfare Centre, Stavanger, Norway. 17 years of experience as a NATO civilian with a focus on efforts to further develop the organisation, the teams and individuals of the NATO HQ within a digital context.

Lt. Gen. ret. Frederick Benjamin „Ben” Hodges III (USA)	Director Pakistan/Afghanistan Coordination Cell, The Joint Staff; Commander Allied Land Command; Commander, US Army Europe; currently Pershing Chair in Strategic Studies at Centre for European Policy Analysis Leadership experience in very senior positions in the USA military. After retirement involved in a think-tank focused on security politics and Eastern Europe and a distinguished book author (see publications).
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Guideline of Questions for the Interview

Hello and welcome. Many thanks for your willingness to participate in this interview.

This research aims to perform a preliminary study. While the overall subject is leadership, the analysis focuses on two components: the influence of digitalisation on leadership manners and a comparison between civilian and military environments. Your interview is an essential part of the research, as the author will draw his conclusions from this.

Introduction

Please elaborate in a few sentences on your professional background.

What do you consider the difference (if existing) between a manager and a leader?

Leadership skill set and tools

Which skills does a successful person leading others need nowadays?

In your view, what is the importance of communication as a leadership tool?

The current pandemic saw several countries (e.g., Germany, Italy and Austria) appoint a General as head of the pandemic response task force.

What do you think is the skill set those countries are looking for with such appointments?

How do you think the environment where leadership happens influences the decisions being made?

Digital Leadership

Talking about digital leadership, what part does a suitable innovation & trial/error culture play for you?

Could transparency in leading be important on the road to an innovative digital era leadership concept?

How would you consider technical developments when it comes to leadership styles?

Your area of expertise

What type of leadership do you consider the most appropriate in your area of expertise and why?

How do you implement/utilise remote leadership in your area of expertise, and what potential challenges could you face?

Conclusion

Do you have any final/concluding points to the topics that have not been covered in the questions before, or would you consider other questions relevant to the matter at hand?

Thank you very much for your answers. You will receive a transcript of the points the author aims to use, and you will be informed once the study is completed.

Data Protection Disclaimer: This Interview conducted by Fabian Böttcher aims at drawing scientific conclusions about before mentioned questions. Participation in this interview is voluntary. You may choose to not participate. You may choose to do so also after completion of the interview. The responses are solely collected for the research. They are treated confidential, and they will be shredded/disposed after completion of the work. A transcript will be added to the annex. The following personal data will be collected: Name, First Name, Occupation/former Occupation. It serves only to determine your credibility as an expert in the subject.

