BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Athena's Wisdom Conference

Hellenic Army Academy

4–6 May 2026 • Vari, Athens

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Conference Structure at a Glance

Day 1 — 4 May 2026

Session block	Included material in this book
Opening Session (09:00 – 10:30, XIROS Auditorium)	• Lt General Vasileios Lampropoulos, HAA Superintendent • Lt. Gen. (GRC A) Georgios Kostidis, Chief of Hellenic Army General Staff • General (Rt) Konstantinos Ginis, Honorary Chief of the Hellenic Army General Staff • Colonel Kate M.H. Conkey, United States Military Academy • Ms. Sarah Elizabeth Chapman Trim, Pembroke College – University of Oxford
Session A: Theoretical and Practical Approaches to Leadership (11:00-13:00, XIROS Auditorium)	• The Philosophical Roots of Centralized and Decentralized Command Models in The Western Military Tradition and The Future of Mission Command • The Leader Rating Gap: How Leaders Rate Their Subordinates • Strategic Leadership on NATO's Eastern Flank – Threats and Chances • Comparative Analysis of The Decision-Making Process According to Field Manuals and Troop Leading Procedures of Small Tactical Units of Land Forces in Bulgarian Armed Forces • Leadership under the Aspect of Logistics: How Logistics Support Leadership
Session B: Ethics, Values, and Trust in Leadership (11:00-13:00, PERROTI Auditorium)	• The Paradox of Humble Leadership • Leadership and Influence in Joint, International and Interagency Environments: Social Identity as Alchemy • Thucydides on Leadership • Authentic Leadership as a Mediator Between Work Values and Ethical Decision Making in Military Contexts • Specifics of the relationship between the components of servant leadership and the dimensions of organizational culture in a military environment

Session C: Future Leaders Session A (14:15-16:45, XIROS Auditorium)	• Artificial Intelligence and Decision Superiority in Contemporary Military Leadership • Self-learning with artificial intelligence in naval cadet training • Leading with Values: Shaping Ethics, Morale and Adaptability in an Era of Emerging Challenges
Session D: Future Leaders Session B (14:15-16:45, PERROTI Auditorium)	• Decision behaviour under system uncertainty in naval cyber training. A scenario-based analysis • The Importance of Leader Flexibility in the Century of Change

Day 2 — 5 May 2026

Session block	Included material in this book
Session E: Military Leadership Development and Assessment (09:00 - 11:00, XIROS Auditorium)	• Implications of leadership on military students training • The Didactics of Military History as a Catalyst in Developing Leadership Skills for Armed Forces Officers: The Case of the Hellenic Army Academy • Leadership Development in Professional Military Education • Xenophon as a leader: the democratic practice of an Athenian oligarch at the dawn of the 4th century BC • Learning Through Experience - An Adjacent Method of Improving the Development of Leader Competencies of the "Henri Coandă" Air Force Academy Cadet's
Session F: Motivation, Performance and Resilience in Leadership – A (09:00 - 11:00, PERROTI Auditorium)	• Decision-Making Under Pressure and Uncertainty: 'In-Extremis' Current Theories and Practice • The Military Leadership Nexus: Physical Exercise and Well-Being as the Biological Catalyst of Mental-Corporal Resilience • Leading Beyond Authority: Building Cohesion in Multinational Operations • Resistance to Change in the Military Environment
Session G: Motivation Performance and Resilience in Leadership – B (11:30 - 13:00, XIROS Auditorium)	• Psychological Resilience as a Key Leadership Competency of Professional Officer Candidates — An Educational Challenge in the Context of Contemporary Military Threats • Psychological Resilience as a Mediator between Big Five Traits and Military Leadership: A Literature Synthesis • The contribution of Joint Training and the role of Resilience and Operational Performance in emergency situations • Physiological Control and Leadership Effectiveness
Session H: Leadership & New Forms of Military Technology (11:30 - 13:00, PERROTI Auditorium)	• Military Leadership in the Age of AI and Drones: Conceptual and Operational Challenges • Algorithmic Advice and Human Authority: Leadership Accountability in an AI-Supported War Game • Technological Innovation and Leadership Transformation: An Ethics- and Safety-by-Design Autonomous System for Life-and-Death Decision-Making
Closing Notes (13:15 – 13:30, XIROS Auditorium)	• Lt General Vasileios LAMPROPOULOS, HAA Superintendent

Day 3 — 6 May 2026

Session block	Included material in this book
Conference Closure (09:30 – 10:30 (XIROS Auditorium)	• Thanos Dokos, Secretary General for National Security • General Vasileios Lampropoulos, HAA Superintendent

Day 1 — 4 May 2026

The abstracts below are presented in the same order as the conference sessions scheduled for this day.

Session A	11:00–13:00	XIROS Auditorium
Theoretical and Practical Approaches to Leadership		

1. The Philosophical Roots of Centralized and Decentralized Command Models in The Western Military Tradition and The Future of Mission Command

Konstantinos Grivas (Hellenic Military Academy)

The proposed paper will examine, in general terms, how sociological and cultural factors promote or hinder the adoption of decentralized command models in wartime, with particular emphasis on the factors that have facilitated or undermined the adoption of centralized or decentralized command structures within European armies.

Among other issues, the paper will explore the role of Western rationalism, as shaped by Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, and how this intellectual tradition, subsequently secularized through the Enlightenment, led to a metaphysical belief in the capacity of science to control the world and its phenomena, including war. This worldview gave rise to models of extreme concentration of authority in "commander–gods," which reached their apogee during the era of the Revolution in Military Affairs in the late twentieth century, through U.S. efforts to eliminate the fog of war and friction from the conduct of warfare and to achieve absolute control via highly centralized and powerful C4ISR systems.

In contrast, the paper will examine the German school of Auftragstaktik, focusing on the role of German Romanticism, Lutheranism, and other intellectual currents in the development of this highly effective decentralized philosophy of command and combat. Finally, the paper will assess how Auftragstaktik / Mission Command is applied today and evaluate its prospects in the warfare of the future.

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2. The Leader Rating Gap: How Leaders Rate Their Subordinates

Kate Conkey (United States Military Academy)

This study investigates a paradox in leadership assessment, which we term the Leader Rating Gap (LRG). Through content analysis of interviews with 25 West Point cadets and tactical officers, we found that raters primarily cited influence behaviors when describing great leadership in general. However, when evaluating their own subordinate leaders' job performance, raters emphasized individual performance behaviors over influence behaviors. These findings have implications for leadership development and assessment practices in military and civilian organizations, highlighting the need for organizations to align their leadership evaluation criteria with desired leadership behaviors and outcomes.

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3. Strategic Leadership on NATO's Eastern Flank – Threats and Chances

Dariusz Kozerawsk (Jagiellonian University)

This paper will characterize and assess the current state of NATO's leadership regarding the countries of its Eastern Flank in the context of their defense capabilities. The main goal of the paper is to determine the importance of strategic leadership in terms of the fundamental challenges facing NATO, with particular emphasis on the threat of armed conflict for the countries of the Alliance's Eastern Flank. The paper, enriched

with a multimedia presentation, will explore, among other things: the security challenges facing NATO on its Eastern Flank; the potential of the Alliance's military resources and potential adversaries; the specific nature of strategic leadership, with particular emphasis on contemporary political and military conditions in the context of chances and threats; recommendations for systemic changes in the building and development of strategic Allied leadership on NATO's Eastern Flank. The author utilized methods of analyzing the literature and normative documents, observing phenomena and processes, and comparing and synthesizing research results. The paper will address the main research problem by formulating recommendations regarding the directions of systemic changes that should be implemented in the process of creating and developing Allied and national capabilities in terms of real strategic leadership, with particular emphasis on NATO's eastern flank countries, to ensure that it meets Alliance standards and enables the creation of real defense capabilities in Central and Eastern Europe.

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4. Comparative Analysis of The Decision-Making Process According to Field Manuals and Troop Leading Procedures of Small Tactical Units of Land Forces in Bulgarian Armed Forces

Nikolai Pavlovski (Vasil Levski National Military University)

The main purpose of the current research paper is to present a comparative analysis of the two decision-making processes by commanders (leaders), namely according to the still active Field Manuals (FMs) and the new adopted since 2024 Troop Leading Procedures (TLP) in Land Forces (LF) of Bulgarian Armed Forces (BAF).

The idea of this topic is to familiarize the scientific community and audience with:

- the decision-making process according to the FMs;

- the essence of the TLP introduced in the beginning of 2024 in LF;

- the comparative analysis of the two decision-making procedures at the low tactical levels of planning and conducting operations;

- comparison of the two decision-making mechanisms by commanders of small tactical units (companies, platoons and squads).

For the purposes of scientific work, a toolkit in the form of a system analysis of eight cascade type as methodology has been applied, which consists of sequential phases, each of which examines part of the decision-making processes. To compare the way of working of two commanders who make decisions according to the two different methods, the entire operation of the comparative analysis is divided into logical steps with their sub-steps, relevant to the two decision-making processes.

From the recreated overview on the topic, it can be summarized the key findings. The scientific study proves that, despite the similarity of the studied decision-making procedures, there are also many differences in the methodology used by the two models. While the studied decision-making order according to the FMs is more applicable during sequential planning, the new TLP model that has entered two years ago is applied in parallel planning. Both ways of working of the commanders of small tactical units have eight steps.

The results of the qualitative comparative analysis of the decision-making systems confirm that there are 8 simple (direct) connections between the two processes, which mainly show similarities. On the other hand, the complex (indirect) connections are 8.375 times more and amount to 67 out of a total of 75 available connections. These complex connections recreate the idea that there are many contrasts and variations between the two decision-making models, although their goal is the same: to prepare leaders and their units to conduct different types of combat operations. From the comparison of the two processes, it is observed that they have their own deep nuances but can also be interchangeable and integrated with each other.

5. Leadership under the Aspect of Logistics: How Logistics Support Leadership

Christodoulos Nikou (University of Piraeus) & Socrates J. Moschuris (University of Piraeus)

This paper examines the critical interdependence between leadership effectiveness and logistics capabilities across military and commercial organisational contexts. Through systematic analysis of contemporary research, we investigate how logistics systems enable and constrain leadership decision-making, whilst leadership styles reciprocally shape logistics innovation, coordination, and resilience. Drawing upon transformational leadership theory, social exchange frameworks, and the Five Factor Model of personality, this study synthesises empirical evidence demonstrating that logistics coordination effectiveness mediates the relationship between leadership strategy and organisational performance. We attempt to analyse how different leadership approaches—transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire—differentially impact logistics agility, innovation capabilities, and supply chain resilience, particularly under conditions of geopolitical disruption and mission-critical operations. The research reveals that effective logistics management may serve as a strategic enabler of leadership, providing the operational foundation necessary for strategic vision implementation, whilst leadership quality determines logistics system adaptability and performance outcomes.

Session B	11:00–13:00	PERROTI Auditorium
Ethics, Values, and Trust in Leadership		

1. The Paradox of Humble Leadership

Alexia Panayiotou (University of Cyprus)

Traditional notions of leadership portray leaders as invulnerable, obsessed with power and control, unaccepting of criticism, and basking in the glory of success. Leaders are tough, distant and inconsequentially rational. In popular culture, leaders are often portrayed as captains or warriors who never leave their "soldiers" behind and always sink with the ship — figuratively and literally.

Or so was the image of the leader in the past. Today, organizations have other requirements in order to navigate a globalized, complex and rapidly changing environment: they require leaders to encourage not to control, to give advice not orders, and to show empathy rather than distant logic. The leader of the new era must be able to encourage collective decision-making, to show understanding, emotion and passion. And, almost paradoxically, leaders must also be ready to admit their mistakes and engage with—not hide—their vulnerabilities. In fact, recent research shows that the most successful leaders are humble leaders.

Drawing on a wide array of literature from management and organization studies, this presentation centers on the role and necessity of humble leadership, even in complex and hierarchical organizations like the army.

2. Leadership and Influence in Joint, International and Interagency Environments: Social Identity as Alchemy

Sarah Elizabeth Chapman Trim (University of Oxford)

For centuries scholars have centred their theories of leadership on the charisma, exceptionalism and resolve of the individual leader. In recent decades, there has been widespread recognition of the limitations of this

view, which has resulted in a more inclusive approach to the study of leadership that embraces the concept of followership. Yet the enduring binary conceptualisation of leadership and followership represents a false dichotomy that ignores the reciprocal influence, or dual agency, that leaders and followers exert on one another, and neglects the inherently social phenomenon that unites and binds them: a sense of shared social identity. The dual-agency theory argues that leaders are only able to exert influence over followers (that is, to lead) to the extent that they engage in identity leadership, where they are seen by their followers as an embodiment of "us".

This short presentation will focus on the four critical behaviours that extensive research has shown are necessary for leadership and influence in joint, multiagency and international environments. Attendees will gain an understanding of how to lead and influence others in complex military environments using specific examples drawn from military, organisational and sporting contexts.

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3. Thucydides on Leadership

Dimitris Panomitros (Hellenic Army Academy)

Thucydides, the well-known Athenian historian of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) and founder of scientific historiography, in his work recognizes the crucial role of leadership, especially in relation to the outcome of the war in question. This crucial role is also distinguished by the hierarchy of the three levels of political analysis that the historian makes (i) of persons ii) of the internal structure and iii) of the international system), as it has been established that the most important level is that of persons, i.e. of leaders.

In the present paper I review recent research and examine the theoretical framework of leadership, which includes, among others, abstraction, generalizations in the form of socio-political axioms or laws and the formulation of prediction, through the following important aspects of leadership, which occur in Thucydides' text: i) Leadership and the body politic in the city-state, ii) leadership in Athens and Sparta, which were the hegemonic powers of the time, iii) the fundamental leadership virtues and, ultimately, iii) the responsibility of the leader.

In conclusion, textual evidence shows that Thucydides provides documented theoretical analysis on leadership, and thus he emerges as the first theorist of leadership in the Western world. Accordingly, it is necessary to revise the prevailing view until now that the originator of leadership theory is Aristotle (4th century BC), whose enormous theoretical contribution is of course undeniable. The issue is clearly chronological, as before the philosopher, in the late 5th century BC, the historian had already developed a theory of leadership, a fact that must be taken into account by modern research. Thucydides' analysis helps leaders (and in general decision-makers), from antiquity on, to better understand the political and social dynamics of decision-making at war and the socially corrosive forces crises inevitably produce; therefore, relevant Thucydidean theoretical analysis proves to be a real point of reference for modern leadership, too.

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4. Authentic Leadership as a Mediator Between Work Values and Ethical Decision Making in Military Contexts

Dimitar Dimitrov (Rakovski National Defence College)

The study explores the relationship between work values, authentic leadership, and ethical decision-making within the military environment, emphasizing the leader's role as a mediator in transforming individual value orientations into moral behavior. Military organizations operate under strict hierarchy, high normativity, and continuous moral pressure, which makes understanding the factors shaping ethical decisions particularly

important. In this context, service members' work values—such as the pursuit of security, belonging, professional development, status, or work–life balance—significantly influence how they interpret their professional duties and respond to moral dilemmas. The central assumption of the research is that authentic leadership mediates the link between work values and ethical decision-making, enabling personal value orientations to translate into consistent ethical behavior.

To measure the key constructs, the study employs three validated instruments. Work values are assessed through the Adapted Work Values Scale, based on the conceptual model of Warr, Cook and Wall (1979). The scale includes 22 items grouped into six factors: balance and well-being, achievement and development, social relations and participation, security and stability, status and rewards, and mission and belonging. Authentic leadership is measured using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), which evaluates the supervisor's self-awareness, moral resilience, transparency, and alignment between values and actions. Ethical decision-making is assessed through the Ethical Leadership at Work Questionnaire (ELW), which captures the individual's tendency to act ethically in professional situations.

The expected findings suggest that values oriented toward collective well-being, intrinsic motivation, professional growth, and moral responsibility are associated with higher ethicality. However, this relationship is likely to be strong and consistent primarily when authentic leadership is perceived. In the absence of such leadership, the influence of work values on ethical decisions weakens or becomes inconsistent. This highlights the role of the authentic leader as an "ethical catalyst" who reinforces and channels individual value orientations into concrete moral behavior. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of leadership mechanisms in the military context and provides an empirical foundation for developing leadership training programs aimed at strengthening ethical culture within armed forces structures.

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5. Specifics of the relationship between the components of servant leadership and the dimensions of organizational culture in a military environment

Simeon Madjarov (Rakovski National Defence College)

This report analyzes the critical interference between the paradigm of servant leadership and the adaptability of organizational culture in national security and defense structures. In the context of contemporary global challenges, classical hierarchical structures with static principles are gradually giving way to organizations based on "intelligent initiative" and the exchange of commitments between leaders and followers (Dimitrov, 2015). The central thesis of the study is that the conceptual skills of the serving leader—the ability for strategic thinking and in-depth understanding of the mission framework—are a determining factor for organizational adaptability in a military environment (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016; Denyer, 2017; Kim et al., 2016; Ma et al., 2018; Ortiz-de-Mandojana & Bansal, 2016; Sapeciay et al., 2017; Suryaningtyas et al., 2019, Denison & Neale, 1999; Fondas & Denison, 1991; Kabigting et al., 2019).

The theoretical framework is based on Liden's (2008) model, integrating dimensions such as "ethical behavior," "empowerment," and "putting followers first." These dimensions directly correspond to fundamental Army values—duty, honor, loyalty, and selfless service. Using the Multiple-Stakeholder Approach (MSAI), the report examines how servant leadership transforms the traditional "hierarchical model" (focused on control and rules) into a "clan model" based on mutual trust and esprit de corps (community spirit) (Liden, et al., 2008, Kumar, 2018).

Special attention is paid to "adaptability" as the ability to translate external signals from the security environment into specific operational actions. The servant leader in the military acts as a "coach" who replaces the exercise of pure power with the art of active listening and building a shared vision. The study emphasizes that conceptual skills allow commanders to see the "unseeable" and encourage organizational learning by

learning from mistakes rather than applying punitive sanctions (Annarelli & Nonino, 2016; Denyer, 2017; Kim et al., 2016; Ma et al., 2018; Ortiz-de-Mandojana & Bansal, 2016; Sapeciay et al., 2017; Suryaningtyas et al., 2019, Denison & Neale, 1999; Fondas & Denison, 1991; Kabigting et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the report argues that mission effectiveness in the security sector is not just a matter of technical training, but the result of synergy between ethical leadership paradigms and a culture that balances stability and flexibility. The implementation of servant leadership creates a "leaderful" environment (a culture rich in leaders) where initiative is a shared responsibility, ensuring the success of the military organization in conditions of high uncertainty (Kumar, 2018).

Session C	14:15–16:45	XIROS Auditorium
Future Leaders A		

1. Artificial Intelligence and Decision Superiority in Contemporary Military Leadership

Giacoppo Martina & Giannone Alessia (Italian Naval Academy)

The contemporary international environment is characterized by persistent strategic competition unfolding simultaneously across economic, political, technological, informational, and military domains. The expectation of a stable post–Cold War order has gradually given way to renewed power rivalries, territorial revisionism, technological arms races, and increasingly assertive geopolitical behaviour. Conflict no longer manifests solely through open confrontation, but through continuous pressure below the threshold of declared war.

The traditional paradigm of warfare - geographically bounded, temporally defined, and predominantly kinetic - has progressively eroded. Modern conflict develops within an integrated multi-domain environment in which cyber operations, space capabilities, information campaigns, economic instruments, and conventional forces interact continuously. In such a context, friction derives less from physical confrontation alone and more from systemic complexity, speed, and informational saturation.

Under these conditions, military leadership faces an unprecedented challenge: decision-making amid exponential data growth, compressed timelines, and cognitive overload. Superiority is increasingly determined not only by firepower, but by information dominance and decision velocity. The central problem is therefore how to preserve strategic clarity and operational effectiveness within a battlespace defined by constant connectivity and technological acceleration.

Artificial Intelligence emerges within this transformation as a decisive cognitive enabler. Through large-scale data fusion, real-time pattern recognition, predictive analytics, and rapid course-of-action generation, AI enhances situational awareness and reduces the cognitive burden placed upon commanders. By integrating heterogeneous inputs from sensors, intelligence networks, and operational platforms, AI compresses the Observe–Orient–Decide–Act (OODA) cycle and strengthens responsiveness in both high-intensity and hybrid scenarios.

At the same time, structural vulnerabilities accompany this technological shift. Algorithmic bias, adversarial manipulation, data corruption, and opacity in machine-learning processes introduce operational and ethical risks. For this reason, Artificial Intelligence must remain a decision-support instrument rather than an autonomous decision-maker. Strategic intent, ethical judgment, and accountability remain inherently human responsibilities.

When properly governed and operationally integrated, AI enhances resilience, increases operational tempo, and reinforces deterrence credibility. The decisive challenge for future military leadership lies not in

technological adoption itself, but in the disciplined integration of artificial intelligence within command structures that preserve human authority while securing decision superiority.

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2. Self-learning with artificial intelligence in naval cadet training

Margarita Moneva & Nikola Vaptsarov (Bulgarian Naval Academy)

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into military environments is transforming not only operational capabilities but also how future officers learn, think, and develop professionally. In naval cadet training, AI is increasingly used for independent study, problem-solving, and preparation for complex operational scenarios. However, its impact on learning behavior and critical thinking remains insufficiently explored.

This paper examines how cadets use AI for self-learning within naval military education and how this shapes their cognitive processes, learning strategies, and professional development. It considers AI both as an enabler of self-directed learning and as a factor influencing analytical reasoning and intellectual autonomy.

The study is based on an empirical investigation conducted among cadets from the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy cadet corps, representing different years of study and specializations. A structured, scenario-based questionnaire was used to capture behavior in realistic training contexts, focusing on interactions with AI during task preparation, problem-solving, and decision-making.

The instrument combines Likert-scale items, situational judgment scenarios, and open-ended responses, enabling both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The collected data were analyzed to identify patterns in learning strategies, levels of critical engagement, and differences in the use of AI across training contexts.

The findings reveal a nuanced and sometimes contradictory pattern of AI use. AI is widely employed as a cognitive support tool, facilitating faster understanding of complex material, exposure to alternative perspectives, and increased confidence in addressing unfamiliar problems. At the same time, the results highlight a tension between efficiency and depth of thinking. While some cadets demonstrate reflective and critical use of AI, others exhibit signs of cognitive shortcutting, including reliance on ready-made answers and reduced verification of information.

These findings suggest that AI does not uniformly enhance learning; rather, its impact depends on how it is used. The study underscores the need for structured guidance in military education to ensure that AI supports, rather than replaces, independent thinking. In this way, it contributes to the development of cognitively resilient, self-directed future naval officers.

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3. Leading with Values: Shaping Ethics, Morale and Adaptability in an Era of Emerging Challenges

Veres Liliana-Maria ("Henry Coandă" Romania Air Force Academy)

Leadership is fundamental to the success of military organizations, guiding the coordination of personnel, forces, and resources to achieve operational effectiveness and fulfill strategic missions. In the rapidly evolving informational era, military leaders must navigate a complex environment, shaped by technological advancements, cyber threats, shifting geopolitical realities and evolving ethical dilemmas. Innovation, adaptability and values-based conduct have become central to effective leadership, as traditional paradigms are increasingly tested by the demands of the modern battlefield.

This article investigates the dynamic interplay between core military values—such as integrity, fairness, empathy, ethical conduct, mutual respect, and courage—and the need for adaptive leadership strategies in contemporary and future operational environments. Commitment to ethical standards is central to the professionalization of military personnel.

This work places particular focus on the perspective of educating and shaping cadets, highlighting the role of leadership values and adaptability in their professional formation. The analysis addresses the enduring necessity to preserve foundational principles,while simultaneously aligning actions and decision-making processes with the dynamic directives and technological developments of the current era. The research is based on a comprehensive review of the available literature in the main academic databases, drawing on recent review articles, empirical studiesand case analyses, to highlight how ethical leadership, sustained morale, and psychological resilience are vital for organizational cohesion and readiness. Particular attention is given to the importance of developing leaders who not only embody traditional values but are also capable of updating and transforming these values to meet unprecedented challenges posed by rapid technological progress and operational uncertainty.

The modern operational environment is characterized by unpredictability, ambiguity and accelerated change, requiring military organizations to cultivate high levels of adaptability and innovation. This article emphasizes the need for the continuous reevaluation of leadership practices and the integration of human factors—such as team cohesion, well-being, and cultural competence—into leadership development initiatives. Through an analytical and evidence-based approach, the paper explores how core principles of military leadership can be preserved and strategically adapted to the requirements of contemporary conflict and future operational scenarios.

By synthesizing values-based leadership with adaptive processes, this article provides actionable insights for leadership development programs and offers recommendations for fostering resilient, ethical and high-performing military units. The findings underscore the critical role of leadership in cultivating ethics, morale and resilience, ultimately supporting operational success in an era marked by complexity, innovation and emerging challenges.

Session D	14:15–16:45	PERROTI Auditorium
Future Leaders B		

1. Decision behaviour under system uncertainty in naval cyber training. A scenario-based analysis

Alexandros Karadzhov & Nikola Vaptsarov (Bulgarian Naval Academy)

The growing reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) and digital systems in naval environments introduces new challenges for decision-making under uncertainty. In cyber-enabled training contexts, cadets must interpret incomplete and conflicting information under time pressure while operating within hierarchical command structures, making their decision behavior a critical factor in training effectiveness.

This paper examines decision behavior among naval cadets in simulated operational scenarios characterized by system uncertainty. It explores how cadets respond to ambiguous data, conflicting system outputs, and discrepancies between automated recommendations, personal judgment, and superior orders.

The study is based on an empirical investigation conducted among cadets from the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy cadet corps, representing different years of study and specializations. A structured, scenario-based questionnaire was developed to reflect realistic training situations, including time-critical decision-making,

unreliable system outputs, and tension between authority and situational awareness. The instrument captures behavioral responses across multiple scenarios, enabling the identification of decision-making patterns. The data were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach, combining descriptive statistics with qualitative interpretation of open-ended responses to uncover underlying reasoning processes.

The findings reveal diverse behavioral tendencies. Some cadets rely on system-generated information, particularly under time pressure, while others prioritize independent judgment or adherence to hierarchical authority. A significant proportion demonstrate adaptive decision-making by balancing multiple sources of input. At the same time, variability is observed in confidence when questioning system outputs and in the willingness to act autonomously under uncertain conditions. These patterns indicate that decision-making is shaped not only by situational factors but also by individual cognitive approaches and levels of trust in technology.

The results highlight the complexity of decision-making in AI-supported environments and underscore the need for training models that develop critical evaluation skills, situational awareness, and decision autonomy. Effective performance in cyber-enabled naval contexts depends not only on access to advanced technologies but also on the ability to critically interpret, challenge, and act beyond system-generated information. The study contributes to the broader discussion on human decision-making in technologically mediated military environments and its implications for future naval operations.

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2. The Importance of Leader Flexibility in the Century of Change

Ilie Vlad ("Henry Coandă" Romania Air Force Academy)

Leadership has always been the basis of both military and civilian organizations. To achieve an important goal, a thorough and well-tuned organization is required. The leader is the person who assembles the planning puzzle so that the people in command achieve the proposed goal in the most beneficial way possible. We live in a time when technology is developing at an alarming rate, and the only possibility to meet this challenge is adaptability to new modes of operation. In recent years, the conflagration in Ukraine has demonstrated the military superiority of new AI-based weapons and the lightning-fast development of drones.

The first necessary quality of the current leader is his flexibility in thinking and reacting. To achieve this quality, he must know himself and his subordinates very well to know his own limits of his control apparatus. After knowing these limits, the leader must know how to increase the performance of his people through methods that are as appropriate as possible and in the environment around them. As society has developed, the people of the era in which we live do not have the same problems they had 30 years ago. The level of stress and fear in the military has increased with the evolution of modern weapons. No one would have thought that the psychological effect of the siren noise of the Stuka Ju-87 dive bombers would be replaced by the hum of the 4 small engines of an FPV. In the current context in which we live, a leader must adjust himself to these new devastating psychological effects that are present on the new battlefield to be able to maintain the personnel he leads in the best possible shape, both mentally and physically.

The article presents a picture of the defining characteristics of how a leader operates in the new global context. The leader of the new war needs a speed of reaction superior to the hostile forces. It must prevent disastrous events that can occur with one and a half moves in front of the enemy. This principle is based on the idea that if the enemy advances with a position, superiority remains on our side. The commander is the one who takes the initiative in operations, takes care of his people and organizes all operations to be completed successfully. It is the base of the tree that must bloom.

Day 2 — 5 May 2026

The abstracts below are presented in the same order as the conference sessions scheduled for this day.

Session E	09:00–11:00	XIROS Auditorium
Session E: Military Leadership Development and Assessment (09:00 - 11:00, XIROS Auditorium)		

1. Implications of leadership on military students training

Broscăreanu Ilie-Andrei (Nicolae Bălcescu" Land Forces Academy)

This paper analyses the role of leadership in the training and education of military cadets, with a particular focus on emerging adulthood (18–25 years) as a critical developmental stage. The study aims to identify how leadership approaches applied within military academies influence the cognitive, psychosocial and professional development of future officers. These psychological constructs, characteristic of the emerging adult who is in the process of developing and shaping both their character and professional skills within the military academic environment, represent the pathways through which leadership is internalized by the military student, shaping the portrait of the future leader. The way in which future officers will lead their people is directly influenced by the educational and training strategies promoted by military academies. Thus, we speak of the military leader as a unified whole, in which the values and principles internalized between the ages of 18 and 25 serve as the pillars of the officer's role, which is intertwined with the individual through behavior manifested both in the professional military sphere and in the personal, social sphere. A structured qualitative literature review was conducted using international scientific databases (Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar), focusing on peer-reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2023. The analysis highlights the prominence of transformational and situational leadership models in the specialized literature in contemporary military education and their relevance for preparing cadets to operate in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environments. Through the practices adopted by military academies at a high educational level, we can observe that they have built a system of principles that functions through the officers they have trained, thereby strengthening not only the identity of each officer but also the collective identity of the military organization. The findings emphasize the importance of aligning leadership practices with the developmental characteristics of cadets in order to enhance training effectiveness and institutional performance. The paper contributes to the existing literature by offering a coherent analytical framework applicable to military academies.

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2. The Didactics of Military History as a Catalyst in Developing Leadership Skills for Armed Forces Officers: The Case of the Hellenic Army Academy

Doxakis Komitis (Army History Directorate)

The presentation examines the critical role of the didactics of Military History in developing the leadership competencies of Armed Forces officers within the contemporary operational and organizational framework. It seeks to highlight how the pedagogical methods used to convey historical knowledge directly influence the cultivation of leadership skills necessary for modern warfare and military management.

Specifically, the study provides a historical trajectory of the didactical approaches applied to Military History and their intrinsic link to Leadership as a discipline. The research is grounded in a detailed analysis of curricula (Study Guides) and the content of official textbooks used at the Hellenic Military Academy (Evelpidon). A primary focus is placed on the didactic transformation of these materials—shifting from a chronological

narration of events to a modern, thematic analysis that prioritizes leadership lessons, ethical decision-making, and strategic thinking.

By analyzing this evolution, the presentation demonstrates that the didactics of Military History serve as a vital educational bridge, transforming historical record into a functional tool for the professional and character development of future military leaders.

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3. Leadership Development in Professional Military Education

Sofia Aggeli (Hellenic Air Force Academy)

In contemporary context, it has been argued that through emphasizing combat experiences, the military is praised and, thus, militaristic cultures in modern societies and states are reinforced. Scholars have extensively written on a demilitarization of modern European societies stressing the need to replace warriors with civilized soldiers. But professional soldiers are still required to perform some very brutish, offensive, unpleasant, and uncivilized tasks. Therefore, the term warrior must remain valid. While scholars still detect a questionable civilianization of the military, these developments have undoubtedly led to an increased inclusion of civil education subjects in the curricula of professional military education. Here, the concept of Innere Fuhrung should be noted: in Germany's military professional education system, the distinction between academic education and professional training has an 'institutional character', however, Cadets' learning process does not prohibit the continuation of military socialization with an integration of their role as 'Army Officers' or 'Citizens in Arms'/ ''Innere Führung'' -a contemporary trend in European AFs.

Military leadership and management education are interrelated. As military battles are not part of management education classroom, academic/ teaching faculty need to refer to the relevance of military leadership to civilian contexts and to potential interrelations between military and non- military leadership. A simple and useful tactic would be to demonstrate, through theoretical/ empirical research and case- studies, the influence of military leadership on general leadership thinking. Military research, education and training have created a motivation for examining how military practices can inform (civilian) leadership, and identifying possible connections between them.

The importance of military and civilian leadership in responding to crises is demonstrated, perfectly, by the inclusion of courses on management, leadership and crisis management in military Academies and institutions of higher education. Leadership development remains a critical educational element in modern military education. Military leadership has been perceived as hierarchical, strictly- structured and characterized by pre -planned and pre-programmed decision- making guidelines, pre- established analytical processes, rules, and standard operational procedures/SOPs. However, current security environment and combat context characteristics, urgently, demand a reform of the entire leadership- preparation process for engaging in and managing contemporary crises.

In teaching crisis leadership, it is critical to motivate students, in the classroom, to study military examples, case-studies, combat scenarios and lessons- learned related to leadership. Attempting to distinguish theory considerations on crisis leadership, some perspectives tend to emphasize the role of experience in leading a crisis, thus, providing transferable situation prototypes, which, in turn, will serve as the basis for determining ideal behaviour, actions and decisions during managing crises. Others rely, beyond experience, on the role of personal emotions and human competences -development, for crisis leadership purposes. Such an experiential learning approach to crisis leadership stresses the influence of experience on leaders' understanding of and response to crises. Naturally, this type of experiential approaches seeks, also, to investigate relations and interaction between experience and theory, thus, extending research on the issue.

The experiential learning approach is, theoretically, consistent with research on learning ''from errors and mistakes'', placing an increased emphasis on the 'role of emotions and experience', while offering a generalized approach to 'teaching crisis leadership'. In preparing leaders, to deal with crises, the development of necessary capabilities to handle emotions, in stressful environments, remains critical. Main element in identifying a 'basic guiding- framework' in teaching crisis leadership, is the fact that each crisis has a unique character. Therefore, to best analyze how crises can provide a management learning and organizational behavior context, a linkage between 'crisis- learning literature' and 'management- literature' should be formed.

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4. Xenophon as a leader: the democratic practice of an Athenian oligarch at the dawn of the 4th century BC

Christina - Panagiota Manolea (Hellenic Army Academy)

The second part of Xenophon's Expedition of Cyrus narrates what happened after the troops of the Persian prince Cyrus, who revolted in 401 BC against his brother Artaxerxes, King of Persia, were trapped in the north of Babylon after Cyrus' death. The Greek mercenaries that belonged to these troops, known as the "Ten Thousand", found themselves a thousand miles from home. Deprived of their leaders, they had to go through the mountains of Kurdistan to the coast of the Black Sea. According to Xenophon's account, he was chosen to play a key role in leading the troops during this painful journey. During the latter, the troops elected their own generals and debated what steps should be taken next. In this democratic atmosphere, we clearly see leadership practice that managed to create a sense of common purpose and discipline.

The democratic practice from Xenophon's part may come as a surprise, as he stemmed from a wealthy Athenian family and was a member of the circle of the philosopher Socrates. He was thus not a fan of democracy, but rather of oligarchy – yet he played a prominent role in leading the journey to the Black Sea, a journey that was successful thanks not to an authoritarian, but rather to a democratic model of leadership.

Our paper will show how democratic leadership was put into practice in the journey of the "Ten Thousand". Its methodology will include close reading of Xenophon's text as well as secondary bibliography both on Xenophon and leadership. We will examine what is accomplished through the type of leadership that was put into practice during the journey of the "Ten Thousand". We will also see how some tensions occurred as the troops drew nearer to Greece itself. Xenophon will be evaluated as a leader according to certain cognitive skills that are a critical determinant of leader performance, as set by modern scholars. Finally, we will try to account for the democratic practice of a devoted oligarch.

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5. Learning Through Experience - An Adjacent Method of Improving the Development of Leader Competencies of the "Henri Coandă" Air Force Academy Cadet's

Cristian Dragomir ("Henri Coandă" Air Force Academy)

The purpose of this article is to outline and document the evolution of particular forms of training exercises, to present its learning objectives, and to highlight the value of implementing practical leadership-focused activities in enhancing the development process of future military leaders within the Romanian Air Force.

In order to provide a comprehensive presentation of a leadership field training facility, this article will include an introduction to the principles of experiential learning, a brief history of the use of such a field training facility and a physical and procedural description of it. At the same time, the article will conclude with a description of the learning objectives it tries to achieve in order to fulfill the objectives from the Henri Coandă" Air Force Academy graduate model.

Leadership, followership, team building, communication and problem solving (critical and creative thinking) are basic competencies of the graduate model, essential in the training of the air force officer, which can (and are) taught within the training courses taken within the "Henri Coandă" Air Force Academy. Their substantiation cannot be achieved only by transmitting essential theoretical knowledge to the classroom or through debates in thematic seminars, but it is also necessary to create a learning environment that favors sedimentation. A leadership field training facility offers unique advantages in achieving the proposed objectives, compared to the method designed for use in a classroom.

These advantages come from the specificity of such a facility, as a tool that facilitates experiential training, outdoors. This method of developing certain skills, outdoors, is action-oriented, or in other words, is based on experiential learning concepts. By definition, experiential learning requires that cadets concretely experience the concepts to be learned, rather than learning the associated notions through "symbolic representations". As an example, we can say that experiential learning requires that cadets learn about teamwork rather by actually working in a team, rather than just reading or watching materials about it.

When talking about experiential learning, involvement is the key word. The cadet learns by doing, by cooperating, but above all, he learns from his own experience.

Session F	09:00–11:00	PERROTI Auditorium
Motivation, Performance and Resilience in Leadership - A		

1. Decision-Making Under Pressure and Uncertainty: 'In- Extremis' Current Theories and Practice

Ioannis Ant. Ragies (Hellenic Army Academy)

Leadership in extreme military contexts, as a topic, draws theoretical inspiration and cognitive base from a series of disciplines, thus allowing core competencies from crisis management field can be applied to crisis leadership: preparation capacity; sense-making; decision-making. Crisis leadership research, then, should be combined with existing crisis management literature. Crisis contexts, on the one hand, and extreme/ dangerous situations, on the other, might be different, compatible or complementary. There are certainly similarities, in nature, since war, combat or conflict zones constitute extreme contexts in which armed forces operate. This is, especially true, as, currently, MOOTW, PKOs and HOs have become a predominant factor in global security environment. Advances in technology and equipment, changes in the international social and political environment, and the increased participation in PSOs, have al led to a growing demand for a new type of leaders, at all levels of command. Standard Army officers's education and training for crisis situations is extensive, as combat /war situations are typical crisis contexts. They demand stress- management, flexibility, comfortability in making quick and proper decisions, and team respect. This can be gained, beyond training, through assignments in military missions and operations in dangerous and uncertain environments, worldwide. Leaders, not only at high, but, also, junior and mid- levels, need to be properly equipped to respond to crises by showing responsibility, integrity and critical judgment. Stress, anxiety, insecurity, fear produced by a crisis, all represent a huge challenge for leaders, while, attention needs to be put on factors like confusion and chaos normally revealed during crises.

Combat operations full of unknown risks and hazards are conducted in intense, dangerous situations. Combat leaders must effectively command and lead their troops in challenging contexts, against enemies aiming at destroying them and/or preventing them from accomplishing their mission. The challenge for combat leadership is to mentally prepare leaders to make right decisions, at the right time, through exposing them to

real- life conditions (e.g., simulations and case- studies). This would possibly determine those qualities and characteristics of successful leadership on which future leaders tend to model themselves. Another critical aspect in combat leadership is acting: doing the right things at the right time, while knowing what decisions to be made and when and how to be implemented. However, decisions that need to be made tend to be more complicated as the level of command increases. A commander must be prepared, not only to react to adversary's actions and decisions, but, also, to overcome any limitations involved, demonstrating willingness strength. This will assist self- development, measurement of acquired knowledge and control over others' thinking and actions.

In theory, we apply a combination of, Team Role theory (in uncertain environments, no person can hold all solutions and answers, while team leadership style permits a more holistic, participative, style of leadership where teamwork, problem- solving, decision -making and innovation can, all, emerge) with Path-Goal Theories/ Participative Leadership (leadership should not be enforced on subordinates but it is exercised in conjunction with them, recognizing that leadership cannon be imposed on those led)., as well as, Sense-Making / Sense- Giving (Sense-making is recognized as a function of the military decision-making process when the military is faced with dynamic and uncertain environments. It allows individuals and organizations to approach and transform complex situations, by downgrading them into something they could possibly comprehend (events and/ or information). Sense- giving extends sense-making: as an integrated process, sense-making is related to understanding while sense-giving to influencing and persuading. In an in extremis military context, sense-giving needs to be implemented quickly to prevent mis- perceptions and miscommunication, as those could prove deadly in an In- extremis situation. Research supports that in dangerous contexts, sense-making and sense-giving are emerging simultaneously. In extreme contexts, individuals need to make sense of a certain situation before proceed to logical action, thus, sense-making is transformed into the means through which experience is understood and applied through careful consideration. Researchers debate on the, unintended consequences and the limits of practical consciousness and examine the interaction of action and thought).

Dangerous environments demand a different kind of leadership or different leader characteristics and traits. Sense-making analysis rests on the key characteristics in distinguishing dangerous from conventional contexts: dangerous environments are rich in events that are inherently ambiguous, uncertain, and unexpected. Leadership, as a collective sense-making process, among team members, is applied to reduce environment's negative characteristics. Team members adjust processes, maintain situation- awareness, and remain prepared, flexible, and willing to reconsider, reassess, and change tactics as the situation evolves. Here, a unique perspective on the actual leading in dangerous environments is being offered: leadership is a truly collective undertaking (similar to shared leadership perspective), while influence moves among team members as they develop a common understanding of the situation. Context has an impact on leadership depending on specific environment´s characteristics and leadership approaches. In dangerous contexts, focus is on potential interactions, characteristics and behaviours among danger, leader, and followers, as well as on leadership process per se.

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2. The Military Leadership Nexus: Physical Exercise and Well-Being as the Biological Catalyst of Mental-Corporal Resilience

Vasiliki Kontodimaki & Vasiliki Karamanoli (Hellenic Army Academy)

Purpose: This presentation investigates the relationship between physical conditioning and psychological resilience within military leadership. In high-stakes environments characterized by "information overload"

and chronic stress, the study demonstrates that physical exercise and well-being are not merely fitness metrics but a fundamental biological requirement for maintaining cognitive focus and sound decision-making.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative and empirical review of literature from the last two decades, utilizing databases including ResearchGate, PubMed, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. The review aims to identify the correlation between physical training engagement and leadership performance, demonstrating the impact of physical activity on resilience and decision fatigue. Furthermore, the interplay between physical activity and psychological health was assessed to establish a psychobiological foundation, focusing on biomarkers such as Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF) levels, Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) axis regulation, and Heart Rate Variability (HRV) metrics.

Findings: The reviewed literature indicates a robust positive correlation among systematic physical activity, well-being, and resilience.

Dose-Response Effect: Quantitative analysis indicates that high-intensity training yields high psychological resilience scores and increased stress tolerance.

Neurobiological Buffering: Resilience is identified as an asset acquired through "stress resistance training". Physical activity triggers neurogenesis through BDNF expression, effectively protecting working memory (Prefrontal Cortex) from the neurotoxic effects of elevated cortisol during operational stress.

Military Leadership: It is conceptualized as an iceberg, where the "visible level" of leadership effectiveness is supported by an "invisible level" comprising physical development, physiological stability, and autonomic regulation. High HRV emerged as a key biomarker associated with faster stress recovery and superior leadership presence. This physiological foundation reduces stress transmission within units and enhances overall mission endurance.

Conclusions: A "Holistic Health and Fitness" program is vital for modern military readiness because leadership demands intense cognitive flexibility, and physical well-being serves as the primary biological background for mental resilience. Future military training should prioritize metabolic and hormonal health as strategic assets essential to ensuring mission success.

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3. Leading Beyond Authority: Building Cohesion in Multinational Operations

Noel Diaz Munoz, Ana Peral Tudanca, Enrique Martinez Baixauli & German Bruzos Gutierrez (Spanish Air and Space Force Academy)

Modern military operations are increasingly conducted in joint, multinational, and interagency environments where authority is formally structured but practically constrained. While multinational cooperation is often presented as a strategic necessity, less attention is given to the structural friction it generates at the operational and tactical levels. This presentation examines how leadership operates within — and compensates for — those frictions.

The purpose of this lecture is to analyze the distinction between command and leadership in multinational operations and to explore how effective leadership mitigates structural barriers inherent to coalition environments. These barriers include cultural and cognitive differences, national caveats and legal restrictions, divergent rules of engagement, information asymmetries, and differing strategic risk perceptions. Rather than treating these elements as anomalies, the paper approaches them as systemic characteristics of multinational warfare.

Methodologically, the analysis combines doctrinal reflection with professional experience drawn from a multinational airborne command-and-control environment. The discussion is not intended as a case study of a specific operation, but as an applied conceptual examination grounded in operational and tactical practice.

Relevant leadership theory and mission command principles are used to frame the analysis without turning the discussion into a doctrinal review.

The main finding is that while command structures organize multinational forces, they do not guarantee coherence of action. In environments where authority is fragmented and freedom of maneuver varies by nation, leadership becomes the decisive factor in sustaining effectiveness. Influence, legitimacy, technical credibility, and deliberate trustbuilding emerge as essential mechanisms through which leaders compensate for structural constraints. When leadership successfully bridges these gaps, multinational operations evolve from being merely a functional necessity into a source of operational resilience and strategic cohesion.

The presentation ultimately argues that in contemporary coalition warfare, command establishes structure — but leadership enables unity of effort. When exercised effectively, leadership not only sustains operational coherence under constraint, but also reinforces professional trust, interoperability, and mutual understanding among allied forces. In this sense, multinational operations become more than coordinated action: they become formative experiences that strengthen collective effectiveness over time.

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4. Resistance to Change in the Military Environment

Yurii Korniichuk (Zhytomyr Korolov Military Institute)

This paper examines organizational change management in military units within the context of modern warfare, with a particular focus on the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The ongoing transformation driven by the adoption of NATO standards, rapid technological innovation, and the evolving nature of combat operations necessitates a systematic and adaptive approach to change. The aim of this study is to analyze how classical and contemporary change management models can be effectively applied in a military environment to enhance unit effectiveness and operational readiness.

The methodology is based on a combination of theoretical analysis and practical case study. The research integrates established management theories, including Kurt Lewin's three-stage model, John Kotter's eight-step framework, and the ADKAR model, alongside the concept of dynamic capabilities. These frameworks are adapted to the military context and examined through the real-world example of the integration of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in Ukrainian military units. The study also incorporates doctrinal principles such as Commander's Intent, structured communication planning, and After Action Review (AAR) as mechanisms supporting successful change implementation.

The findings demonstrate that organizational change in military units is most effective when approached as a continuous, structured process rather than a one-time initiative. Key success factors include clear leadership vision, effective communication, involvement of personnel, systematic training and certification, and the use of "quick wins" to build momentum. Additionally, understanding and managing resistance to change—through education, participation, and leadership support—significantly increases the likelihood of successful transformation.

The paper concludes that the ability to manage change is a critical competency for modern military leaders. By combining scientifically grounded models with practical mechanisms tailored to the realities of warfare, commanders can ensure that their units remain flexible, resilient, and capable of responding to rapidly changing operational environments. This approach directly contributes to increased combat effectiveness and long-term organizational adaptability.

Session G	11:30–13:00	XIROS Auditorium
Motivation, Performance and Resilience in Leadership - B		

1. Psychological Resilience as a Key Leadership Competency of Professional Officer Candidates — An Educational Challenge in the Context of Contemporary Military Threats

Agnieszka Tauroginska-Stich (Military Academy of Land Forces, Wrocław)

The article addresses the issue of psychological resilience (and its determinants) as a key leadership competency of professional land forces officer candidates, in the context of contemporary military threats. The aim of the study is to identify possible directions for improving the educational process at military universities in terms of developing this competency, taking into account the lessons learned from the war in Ukraine. The author argues that psychological resilience, understood as the ability to maintain operational effectiveness under conditions of extreme combat stress, should currently constitute the foundation of systemic leadership education at military academies and universities. Based on a review of the relevant literature and the results of the author's own research, directions for change were formulated regarding the development of leadership competencies of students at military universities, encompassing five dimensions of personal combat readiness: physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and family. Psychological resilience, as a fundamental dynamic competency, can be consciously shaped in the process of military education. This fundamental distinction legitimises its inclusion in officer training programs and establishes it as a fully valid subject of research.

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2. Psychological Resilience as a Mediator between Big Five Traits and Military Leadership: A Literature Synthesis

Vasiliki Karamanoli (Hellenic Army Academy) & Vasiliki Kontodimaki (Hellenic Army Academy)

Background: Psychological resilience and personality traits have been identified as key psychological determinants of individual performance in high-stress environments such as military service and leadership. Personality, frequently operationalized through the Big Five model, has been linked to leadership effectiveness, while resilience research has focused on adaptive performance in the face of adversity. However, the existing literature indicates a need to integrate these lines of research within military contexts to better clarify how personality traits and resilience jointly interact to predict leadership and performance under operational stress.

Objective: This review synthesizes empirical and theoretical findings to map associations, potential mediation/moderation mechanisms, and methodological approaches regarding the relationships among psychological resilience, Big Five personality traits, and leadership or performance outcomes in military and defense settings.

Methods: Systematic search strategies were conducted across multiple electronic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar, focusing on peer-reviewed empirical studies, narrative and systematic reviews, and conceptual frameworks published in the last two decades. Key terms included combinations of “resilience”, “Big Five”, “personality”, “military leadership”, “military performance”, and “defense personnel”. Inclusion criteria emphasized quantitative research and meta-analytic/synthesis reviews addressing the constructs of interest.

Results: Findings consistently show that resilience and Big Five traits are linked with performance outcomes in military contexts. Resilience has been shown to correlate negatively with Neuroticism and positively with Conscientiousness and Extraversion, with these traits also associating with leadership effectiveness in

broader organizational and military samples. The literature reveals that resilience can both mediate and moderate the effects of personality on performance and leadership, especially under high perceived stress, and it compensates for lower levels of certain personality traits in predicting military performance.

Conclusions: International evidence underscores the importance of considering personality and resilience jointly when assessing and developing military leadership capabilities. Resilience emerges as a dynamic adaptive mechanism influenced by personality traits, enhancing performance and leadership outcomes in stressful military environments. Continued use of longitudinal designs and multi-method approaches is recommended to clarify causal pathways and to inform training and selection interventions.

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3. The contribution of Joint Training and the role of Resilience and Operational Performance in emergency situations

Euphrosyne Efthimiadou (Hellenic Air Force Academy), Stamatia Sofiou (Hellenic Army Academy) & Eleni Mourkoyianni (Hellenic Coast Guard)

The modern operational reality of the Armed Forces is characterized by high complexity, threat asymmetry and an increasing frequency of crises, which require not only technological superiority but also human and organizational resilience. In this context, the concept of Resilience emerges as a critical factor that directly affects Operational Performance, especially in interdisciplinary action and training environments.

This study examines the relationship between Resilience and Operational Performance in crisis situations, focusing specifically on the Joint Training of the Armed Forces (SQF MILOF, https://esdc.europa.eu/sqf-milof/). Resilience is approached at multiple levels, as an individual psychological characteristic (stress management ability, adaptability, cognitive flexibility), as a group dynamic (cohesion, trust, leadership) and as an organizational property (structures, action doctrine, learning culture). Accordingly, Operational Performance is defined not only in terms of mission success, but also in terms of indicators of response speed, quality of decision-making, interoperability and sustainability of forces under pressure.

Particular emphasis is placed on cross-sector training as an institutional field for cultivating resilience. The coexistence of different branches with distinct cultures, doctrines and operational practices creates increased cognitive and organizational demands, which in crisis conditions can either function destabilizing or, if they have been previously trained, enhance collective resilience. Through high-intensity scenarios, realistic crisis exercises and feedback mechanisms, Joint Training can be transformed into a laboratory for developing adaptive capabilities and a common operational understanding (Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP), nov.2023, https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/2023/11/17/f7177a3c/23-07-594-military-decision-making-process-nov-23-public.pdf).

This approach demonstrates that resilience is not a complementary or “soft” parameter of military training, but a fundamental prerequisite for high operational performance in critical situations. Its integration into cross-sectoral training requires systematic planning, an interdisciplinary approach and the evaluation of both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators. In conclusion, strengthening resilience at the individual, team and organizational levels constitutes a strategic investment for the effectiveness and sustainability of the Armed Forces in the modern crisis environment.

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4. Physiological Control and Leadership Effectiveness

Martin Danielov Simeonov ("Georgi Benkovski" Bulgarian Air Force Academy)

Introduction: In modern military environments, leadership effectiveness is increasingly influenced not only by cognitive abilities and technical competence, but also by the leader's capacity to regulate their internal state under pressure. This paper explores the role of physiological control as a key factor in enhancing motivation, performance, and human factors in military leadership.

The primary objective of this study is to examine how deliberate regulation of physiological processes - such as breathing patterns, posture, and physical activation - can influence cognitive performance, emotional stability, and decision - making in high - stress situations. The concept of a "peak state," defined as an optimal psychophysiological condition for performance, is used as a conceptual framework for analyzing leadership effectiveness.

Methods and Results: The methodology combines a review of existing research in performance psychology, human physiology, and leadership science, with a conceptual analysis of state management techniques commonly applied in high - performance domains. Particular attention is given to the relationship between physiological activation and key leadership attributes, including situational awareness, resilience, and motivational influence over others.

The findings suggest that leaders who actively regulate their physiological state are better equipped to maintain focus, manage stress, and sustain high levels of motivation. Furthermore, such leaders demonstrate improved communication, faster decision - making, and a stronger ability to positively influence team dynamics. The integration of simple, practical techniques - such as controlled breathing and posture adjustment - can lead to measurable improvements in both individual and team performance.

Conclusions: In conclusion, physiological control represents a critical yet often underutilized component of military leadership development. Incorporating state management strategies into training programs has the potential to significantly enhance leadership effectiveness, particularly in dynamic and high - pressure operational environments.

Session H	11:30–13:00	PERROTI Auditorium
Leadership & New Forms of Military Technology		

1. Military Leadership in the Age of AI and Drones: Conceptual and Operational Challenges

Ilias Panagiotopoulos (Hellenic Military Academy)

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and unmanned aerial systems (drones) into modern warfare has fundamentally transformed the operational landscape. The purpose of this study is to (a) examine the leadership challenges emerging from this technological shift, and (b) analyze how AI-enabled systems and drone warfare affect leadership in military operations.

The methodology of this study is based on qualitative analysis, drawing on recent academic literature and defense policy reports related to the integration of AI and drones into modern warfare. Case studies of contemporary conflicts where drones and AI-assisted systems have been actively deployed were reviewed to identify leadership challenges. Comparative analysis was used to evaluate how traditional leadership principles align – or conflict – with technology-driven military operational environments.

The findings reveal several critical leadership challenges. First, decision-making speed has dramatically increased due to AI-supported data processing and real-time surveillance. Leaders must interpret complex algorithmic outputs quickly while retaining ultimate responsibility for operational outcomes. This creates tension between human judgment and machine recommendations. Second, the diffusion of accountability becomes more complicated when AI-enabled systems are involved. Determining responsibility for unintended consequences – whether technical malfunction or algorithmic bias – poses legal and ethical difficulties. Third, maintaining trust within military units is increasingly challenging as remote warfare distances leaders and operators from the battlefield. Commanders must foster cohesion and morale among personnel who may conduct operations from geographically dispersed locations. Finally, leaders must address cybersecurity risks, as AI-enabled systems and drone networks are vulnerable to hacking, spoofing, and electronic warfare.

In conclusion, military leadership in the era of AI and drones requires a hybrid skill set that combines traditional military competencies with technological literacy and ethical awareness. Effective leaders must balance human oversight with machine efficiency, ensure accountability in digital environments, and adapt command practices to increasingly complex battlefields. The evolving character of military operations demands not only advanced technology but also adaptive and responsible leadership.

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2. Algorithmic Advice and Human Authority: Leadership Accountability in an AI-Supported War Game

Ioanna K. Lekea (Hellenic Air Force Academy), Fani Kalampaka (Hellenic Tactical Air Force), Nikolaos S. Kanellopoulos (Hellenic Military Academy), George K. Lekeas (City St George's, University of London)

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and autonomous systems into contemporary military operations is reshaping leadership practice, authority distribution, and ethical accountability within mission command structures. As AI-enabled systems increasingly provide targeting recommendations, operational prioritization, and real-time analytics in complex operational environments, the distinction between human decision-maker and algorithmic advisor becomes progressively blurred.

Purpose: This paper examines whether and how the degree of AI integration in leader–machine teaming environments influences patterns of ethical responsibility and accountability attribution among commanders and operational teams. It seeks to determine whether increasing AI autonomy strengthens decision performance while simultaneously altering perceptions of moral ownership and command responsibility.

Methodology: The paper combines conceptual analysis with experimental testing. First, it develops a theoretical framework connecting human–machine teaming, decentralized leadership, and normative responsibility in AI-supported operations conducted under time pressure and uncertainty. It argues that while AI support enhances speed, situational awareness, and information synthesis, it may simultaneously generate authority ambiguity, diffusion of responsibility, and moral distancing effects—particularly when system outputs are opaque or perceived as highly reliable. Second, it empirically tests this hypothesis through an interactive online war game platform designed to simulate AI-supported operational decision-making in a high-tempo environment. Participants engage remotely in dynamic tactical missions involving UAV operations to execute targets in complex urban environments, real-time ISR inputs, evolving mission constraints, collateral damage considerations, and rule-of-engagement considerations. Experimental conditions systematically vary (a) the level of AI autonomy, (b) the transparency of algorithmic reasoning, and (c) the availability of human override mechanisms. Embedded analytics capture decision patterns, response times, justification narratives, and post-scenario responsibility attribution assessments.

Key Findings: Preliminary results indicate that transparent AI reasoning and clearly structured human override authority significantly reinforce perceived moral ownership, accountability clarity, and command coherence. In contrast, higher levels of opaque autonomy correlate with increased diffusion of responsibility, authority ambiguity, and reduced clarity in accountability judgments. The findings suggest that responsibility attribution in AI-enabled tactical operations is not merely a doctrinal issue but is strongly shaped by system architecture and interface design.

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3. Technological Innovation and Leadership Transformation: An Ethics- and Safety-by-Design Autonomous System for Life-and-Death Decision-Making

Ioanna K. Lekea (Hellenic Air Force Academy), Stavros Tsantzalis, (Hellenic Air Force Academy), Dimitrios S. Stamatelos (Hellenic Air Force Academy), Petros Savourdos (Hellenic Air Force General Hospital)

The modern battlespace is evolving into a high-tempo, high-risk environment characterized by hybrid threats and rapidly changing operational conditions. High casualty rates, contested evacuation routes, and technological constraints increasingly challenge traditional medical evacuation (CASEVAC) systems, creating operational hazards for medics and limiting timely access to care for casualties.

Purpose: This paper investigates how an ethics- and safety-by-design autonomous system can transform battlefield leadership by supporting commanders and operational teams in critical, life-and-death decision-making. It examines how AI-enabled triage and evacuation influence ethical accountability, mission command, and decentralized leadership under extreme operational pressure and uncertainty.

Methodology: The study combines conceptual design with lab validation testing in representative high-tempo scenarios. The system integrates Ethics-by-Design and Explainable AI (XAI) in autonomous UAVs and UGVs, sealed CASEVAC pods, and real-time operational planning tools. Scenarios simulate contested urban environments, varying casualty numbers, operational tempo, and AI autonomy levels. Embedded analytics evaluate system performance, human exposure reduction, and leadership decision-making under stress.

Key Findings: Results show that autonomous triage and evacuation improve casualty survivability while reducing risk to medical personnel. Transparent AI reasoning and structured human override mechanisms enhance commanders' situational awareness, ethical responsibility, and ability to make rapid, life-and-death decisions. The findings indicate that AI integration supports a transformation of battlefield leadership, enabling leaders to retain meaningful control, moral accountability, and operational coherence in high-pressure, uncertain environments.