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Leadership Undefined: The Paradoxes of Future Military Leadership

Martijn W. van Eetveldt, Richard G. Oppelaar, and Peter Olsthoorn

Abstract: This article is about a paradox approach to leadership. Our purpose is to contribute to raising awareness that paradoxes are inextricably linked to military leadership. We expect paradoxes to play an even more prominent role in military practice. Military academies will therefore have to prepare officer candidates as well as possible for those paradoxes. A paradox approach to leadership can assist to ensure that leaders are as responsive as possible to what the context requires and maximize both their own leadership potential and that of their teams. Implementing this approach is no easy task. A first step is to make context the central focus and abandon the notion that leadership can be defined and understood in simple terms. On the basis of theoretical insights, we provide direction to facilitate the development of a paradox mindset among officer candidates. This article's key added value is the introduction of a usable tool for training programs, namely the adaptive paradox framework. Our aim is to make the complex world of paradoxes more manageable for officer candidates and their immediate environments and to build a bridge between theory and practice. The question is whether we are willing and able to recognize paradoxes, and how we deal with them.

Keywords: Paradox Framework; Military Leadershi; Meta-paradoxes: Adaptive Leadership; Leadership Paradoxes.

Introduction

The Netherlands armed forces intend to be both a robust and agile organization.¹ Defence Vision 2035 states that the defense organization wishes to be better equipped in terms of countering hybrid threats and conducting operations in the information environment. This means that the Netherlands armed forces will have to incorporate other ways of fighting. The armed forces must be able to respond on time in different domains, with different military and civilian partners. It is not only about technological innovation, but also about social innovation.² At the same time, it must remain possible to respond rapidly and effectively to physical hostile activities and to fall back on tried and tested combat drills. These requirements evoke an image of contradictions. We believe that the ability to deal with paradoxes is essential for officers and the teams with which they work.

We first outline how context occupies a prominent place in modern views about leadership. We then explain why various contexts require a paradox approach. This is followed by a consideration of how paradoxes play a role in leadership and how that role relates to current and future military practice. In this connection, we introduce two adaptive meta-paradoxes and our paradox framework. We explain how this framework can be used to prepare officer candidates for diverse contexts and subsequently set forth a number of recommendations for learning how to deal with leadership paradoxes. We conclude with a number of implications.

Leadership Undefined

Over the years, leadership theory has evolved from a traditional paradigm, which assumed stability and predictability, to a paradigm in which the focus was on change and on how to engage people in that change. A contextual paradigm that assumes complexity as its point of departure is now gaining ground. Unpredictability and disruption are major factors in this paradigm. Leadership in this regard can also be shaped as something that those involved arrange together rather than being purely a function of an individual.³ An increasing number of theories view leadership as an interpersonal phenomenon that occurs in a certain context⁴ in which people are collectively pursuing a shared goal.⁵ For a long time, the emphasis in both the literature and practical research was on the position of the person in charge. Insufficient attention was paid to the social interaction with other people involved and the effect of the context on the leadership process.^{6,7} The traditional leadership approach assumes that only bosses or managers can lead, and employees can only follow.^{8,9}

In a dynamic and complex world, leaders cannot know and oversee everything. It is therefore necessary to develop and use the leadership potential within teams and organizations to the greatest extent possible.¹⁰ Moreover, formal leadership is not always in place in interactions between a diversity of partners. In such situations, the parties involved must collectively find a way to shape leadership. This requires a more dynamic perspective that makes it possible for employees to both lead and follow in different situations.^{11,12} In the literature on leadership, these developments can be seen in the emergence of new leadership theories, such as “distributed leadership,” “shared leadership,” “emergent leadership,” and “network leadership.”¹³ In recent literature on teams that operate in extreme conditions, leadership is likewise viewed as something that is distributed within teams. This literature also focuses on the enactment of leadership functions within and by teams¹⁴ and on the switching between leading and following within teams.¹⁵ Of course, activities in which stability and unequivocalness are paramount¹⁶ and critical situations that require decisive leaders who provide an immediate answer¹⁷ remain ever present. Nevertheless, the extent to which military organizations operate in isolation is likely to decrease further in the near future. Increasing adaptiveness in leadership is therefore required. In the past year, for example, starting officers in the Netherlands armed forces had to set up COVID-19 testing facilities in cooperation with employees of health organizations, employment agencies, and volunteers.

This article was written from the perspective that context must constitute the starting point rather than the prevailing military ideas about leadership. The title is meant as an appeal to resist the tendency to define leadership in a too simple and clear-cut way, thereby providing scope for the awareness that leadership is inseparable from the context. Indeed, it is the context in which the officer must operate that forms the starting point in the new version of the profile of the Netherlands armed forces officer which was published in 2021. In an operational context with traditional hierarchical command and control procedures,

it makes sense to look to leaders for answers and solutions. While this leader-centric approach can save lives in certain contexts, it can be a hindrance in the case of complex problems for which the leader does not have immediate solutions. Participative leadership, on the other hand, can be essential to the resolution of complex issues or to innovation, but can seriously hinder progress when decisions have to be made under time pressure. We therefore argue that service members should first consider what they have to achieve together in a certain context and then adapt the leadership process accordingly.¹⁸ Officers have always had to operate in different contexts. They will most probably have to do so more frequently in the future. Moreover, the levels of complexity associated with these contexts are likely to increase. We must therefore prepare officers in a different way.

A Paradox Approach

The ambition of the Netherlands armed forces is to be both robust and agile. At first glance, this ambition contains two irreconcilable perspectives. However, organization theory shows that a dynamic context requires organizations to work on structure and efficiency as well as on the ability to change.¹⁹ In practice, both elements of this field of tension play a role. The term “paradox” is used for such “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time.”²⁰

While preparing for tomorrow requires flexibility and creativity, profits for today require control and stability.²¹ This is the familiar tension between exploration and exploitation.²² To remain viable in the long term, organizations must continuously work on innovation while managing today’s business.²³ This is no easy task. When organizations are under pressure, people are more likely to emphasize contradictions and make one-sided choices. An area of tension is then experienced as a problem that can be solved by logical reasoning and opting on that basis for option A or option B.²⁴ A paradoxical approach examines how both A and B can be effective at the same time.²⁵ Using the advantages of both sides unlocks the potential for synergy.²⁶

At first glance, the paradox of exploitation and exploration seems to be a matter only for senior management. This field of tension also occurs at the micro level, however. On the one hand, employees must meet their job requirements, work in accordance with standard procedures, and perform their daily work as well as possible (exploit). On the other, they are expected to come up with better and new ways of performing their work and solving problems (explore).²⁷ An example from military practice is the participation of Dutch service members in NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Lithuania. This mission requires conducting exercises focusing on standard operating procedures and robust military action in order to be prepared for what are referred to as steel-on-steel combat scenarios. The actual threat, however, is hybrid in nature. It requires all military personnel, right down to the lowest level, to think about how they can adapt their way of working and their behavior to this hybrid threat. They are therefore discovering new ways of working. To be able to deal with these tensions, more is required than a prototypical

“shut up and follow me” form of leadership. If we take context as the starting point for the kind of leadership needed, it does not seem possible to avoid a paradox approach to leadership.

The Paradox Framework

Modern leaders have to deal with a broad range of organizational and leadership paradoxes.^{28,29} Many of these paradoxes seem to overlap and to be variants of an overarching higher-level construct. Craig L. Pearce and his co-authors introduced the concept of meta-paradoxes.³⁰ By focusing on overarching paradoxes, leaders can work on several underlying paradoxes simultaneously. This can prevent them from getting caught up in a single paradox of a lower order and overlooking other important paradoxes as a result.³¹ We build on this concept of meta-paradoxes to lay a foundation for modern military leadership.

The literature on military leadership clearly shows the tension between, on the one hand, formal or hierarchical leadership and, on the other, leadership as a collective process.³² This is the first paradox that we wish to single out. As intertwined as hierarchical leadership and the traditional military organization may be, a complex context means that military leaders must be able to obtain the knowledge and experience required both from within and outside their own teams, even outside their own organizations. Increasingly, there will be integrated multidomain cooperation or network cooperation with both civilian and military partners. In that context, hierarchical leadership alone is not enough to achieve collective solutions and exercise influence effectively. No single individual has the answers to all of the questions or has all of the relevant information required. Military leadership can therefore also be seen as a collective process rather than as the exclusive province of commanders.³³ In crises and combat situations, military leaders tend to think in terms of hierarchical control, the chain of command, and the formal delegation of authority. Nevertheless, formal control in the chain of command can also be deviated from in combat conditions if the situation so requires. An example in this regard is a fighter pilot who temporarily takes over command from the flight leader to deal with an unexpected threat or danger.³⁴ Another example is the way in which some Dutch platoon commanders operated in Afghanistan. They joined one of their squads and the squad commander concerned directed them as squad members during combat actions. This enabled the platoon commander to focus more on leading the platoon as a whole.³⁵ Wherever possible, military leaders should be aware of how they can simultaneously work with both sides of this paradox.

A second paradox concerns the tension between, on the one hand, maintaining control on the basis of standard operating procedures and structure and, on the other, leaving scope for flexibility and creativity.³⁶ In a military organization it is necessary to operate in accordance with strict rules and established procedures within a framework of hierarchy. This can lead to risk aversion and micromanagement, as a result of which junior commanders protect themselves by strictly adhering to the rules and no opportunity is

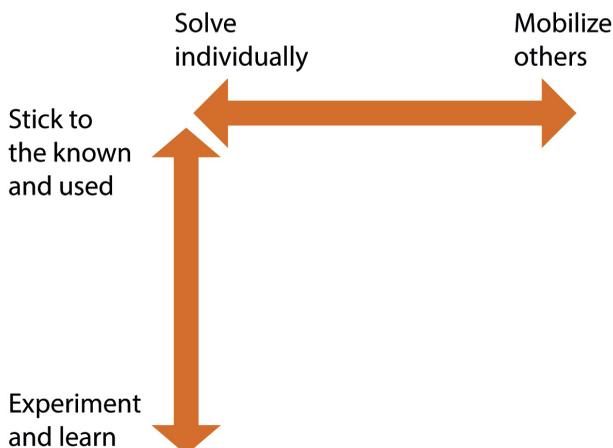
given to experiment and learn from mistakes.³⁷ However, the rapidly and continuously evolving nature of conflicts and threats means that military personnel must be able to respond simultaneously to both sides of this paradox.³⁸ Young Dutch officers reported on this field of tension during NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan. While they described a sense of responsibility and an inclination to personally maintain control, they also recognized that they had to give others a degree of freedom to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. The choice as to whether to intervene or to provide scope for making mistakes was a challenging dilemma.³⁹

Our intention is to better prepare officer candidates for current and expected future challenges. We are therefore introducing a future-proof and adaptive version of meta-paradoxes. To that end, we build on the two paradoxes in military leadership referred to above because we find both opposing poles of those two paradoxes in the ideas of Ron Heifetz regarding adaptive leadership.⁴⁰ Heifetz outlines how in the case of everyday issues it can be effective for a leader to individually provide solutions and work with standard procedures and with what is already known. He also argues, however, that in the case of complex challenges, the leader must mobilize others and provide the opportunity to experiment and learn when discovering a solution or an approach that works.⁴¹ When developing a workshop on adaptive leadership in 2018, we placed these elements in a framework with two dimensions in which “mobilize others” versus “solve individually” meets “experiment and learn” versus “stick to the known and used” (see Figure 1). What is suitable and how it can be achieved can be considered for both the horizontal and vertical dimensions for each situation. This results in a starting position within the framework, which can be adapted if the situation changes. This is a contingency approach, or an “if... then...” approach. By contrast, in a paradox approach, both poles of a field of tension are addressed simultaneously and to the greatest extent possible. By intertwining the concept of meta-paradoxes with adaptive leadership, we arrive at two adaptive meta-paradoxes that we can link in a framework. This enables us to take a further step that is not possible with a contingency approach.

Tools can help to make paradoxes more visible.⁴² In this article, we introduce our adaptive paradox framework, which can be used to train officer candidates to deal with paradoxes. By combining the two adaptive meta-paradoxes and visualizing them in the form of double-sided arrows, we arrived at a framework that constitutes a “playing field” for both a contingency approach of adaptive leadership and a paradox approach to modern military leadership (see Figure 1). The double-sided arrows in our framework symbolize the continuous consideration required when a leader must adjust in horizontal or vertical direction. This characteristic goes with the contingency approach of adaptive leadership. The double-sided arrows also symbolize a leader keeping both ends of the meta-paradoxes in mind and trying to the greatest extent possible to address both poles. This is essential to achieving a paradox approach. The first adaptive meta-paradox requires that leaders not only focus on involving relevant cooperation partners but also continuously assess what they as leaders must or can handle themselves.⁴³ The second adaptive meta-paradox

requires experimenting and learning as well as making use of what is known and used. Our expectation is that using this paradox framework will facilitate the greatest possible progress in adaptive leadership and in the development of a paradox mindset during the training program. On the basis of activities, scenarios and assignments, officer candidates can learn how to use the entire “playing field” and deal with adaptive meta-paradoxes. The adaptive paradox framework makes a step-by-step approach possible; that is, a progression from crawling to walking, and from walking to running.

Figure 1. Adaptive paradox framework



“Crawling” can be learned on the basis of the contingency approach (if... then...) outlined above. The framework can help in making choices with respect to the horizontal and vertical dimension on the basis of what the context requires. In a crisis situation that requires an immediate response or answer, it is usually effective to use standard operating procedures and tried and tested concepts within a framework of formal hierarchy. To solve complex problems, a leader can “mobilize others” and “experiment and learn.” The “mobilize others” and “stick to the known and used” directions of the playing field bring to mind the way in which disaster and crisis management are organized in many countries. They involve multidisciplinary cooperation between organizations on the basis of legal frameworks, plans, and procedures. Regarding the “solve individually” and “experiment and learn” combination, individual efforts or team activities can be undertaken, with a team being internally oriented or working in isolation in experimenting and learning. In the first part of their training program, officer candidates can learn how to navigate the different “parts” of the playing field and become acquainted with the framework’s four basic elements.

The subsequent step to “walking” concerns becoming accustomed to and practicing with a paradox approach. To this end, scenarios or activities that make clear that a one-sided choice (either... or...) or a contingency approach (if... then...) is suboptimal could

be included in a training program. These scenarios or activities could be followed by an explanation about paradoxes and a paradox approach to leadership. Officer candidates could subsequently practice with the individual meta-paradoxes during assignments and activities. We argue that paradoxes of a lower order should also be included in this phase and handled in the training program. Examples include treating people equally versus responding to individual situations, the tension between striving for group cohesion and openness to different insights and opinions, and the paradox of self-interest versus common interest.^{44,45}

The ultimate goal is to enable officer candidates to “run” on the basis of the paradox framework. They must learn to simultaneously address, to the greatest extent possible, both poles of the two fields of tension. With the two meta-paradoxes and our paradox framework, we get to the heart of adaptiveness; that is, how we ensure that we mobilize others to experiment and learn together while the leader, also on the basis of a formal role, can continue to contribute and continues to ascertain which tried and tested concepts and procedures can be used. In our view, this phase should also include efforts to make officer candidates familiar with recognizing and dealing with other relevant paradoxes in different contexts. This is because future leaders will have to face the challenge of continuously handling a broad range of conflicting demands that are intertwined.⁴⁶ Military academies must prepare officer candidates for that challenge.

Learning to Deal With Paradoxes

During their initial training, officer candidates must learn to look at leadership and shape leadership in different ways.⁴⁷ The profile of the Netherlands armed forces officer, for example, states that the modern-day leadership perspective is no longer limited to the individual or the commander, emphasizes the collective responsibility to shape leadership, and highlights the necessity to strike a balance between leading and following, depending on the context. When leadership is viewed as something that is changeable over time, it is likely that officer candidates will be more capable of dealing with the challenges that they face.⁴⁸ To ultimately be able to deal with the meta-paradox of “solve individually” versus “mobilize others,” during their initial training, officer candidates must also learn what the role of a formal leader is in the case of leadership as a collective process.⁴⁹ In the past, officers were generally not required to exhibit leadership behavior that differed from that which was considered effective at the units until reaching policy or senior management level. Today, officer candidates in their first postings may already have to deal with a variety of situations that require a different form of leadership. The case of a second lieutenant posted to the Royal Netherlands Army Airmobile Brigade can serve as an illustration. During his first posting as a platoon commander, the battalion had a large number of vacancies. The decision was therefore made to recruit regionally rather than through the national recruitment organization. The second lieutenant’s task was to coordinate these regional activities and liaise with various stakeholders within and outside the defense organization. Clearly, the kind of leadership required for this task differed from the kind exercised when working with airmobile standard operating procedures.

Regarding the “stick to the known and used” versus “experiment and learn” meta-paradox, it is important to incorporate sufficient scope for the development of both sides into the training program. In terms of “stick to the known and used,” we can give officer candidates the opportunity to become acquainted and gain experience with the most important tried and tested standard operating procedures, instruction cards, and drills in the area of military leadership. To be able to experience a field of tension, we believe that it is essential for officer candidates to become aware of the downside of routine and habits⁵⁰ and gain experience with respect to “experiment and learn.” This requires scope to try things, make mistakes, and learn from each other.⁵¹

Furthermore, for a paradox-oriented leadership approach, it is essential that officer candidates be exposed to a diversity of contexts. The starting question is always: What form of leadership is appropriate to the context and the shared goal? On the basis of this question, the training program can include a “both... and...” approach as a valuable addition to the “if... then...” contingency approach. Regarding the “stick to the known and used” and “solve individually” combination, the aim is to provide situations in which the leader focuses on the most essential tasks and tries to manage potential risks. This requires situational awareness and convergent thinking so that complexity can be exchanged for simplicity and decisiveness.^{52,53} Mobilizing others to experiment and learn together requires something else, which makes it necessary to zoom out, diverge, and adopt the viewpoint that people look at things in different ways. We link the term “contextual awareness” to this process. By alternately learning to converge and diverge, officer candidates can develop both forms of awareness. With a view to contextual awareness, we argue for “being a don’t knower”⁵⁴ as an addition to the situational “knowing what’s going on.”

It seems logical to assume that a paradox mindset precedes a paradox approach to leadership.⁵⁵ A paradox mindset is “a tendency to value, accept and feel comfortable with tensions”.⁵⁶ A paradox approach to leadership starts with the acceptance that both sides of a paradox can apply simultaneously. To that end, it helps to think in terms of “looking for options” rather than “solving problems.”⁵⁷ One must be open to the unique added value of each side of a paradox and study both sides more closely. Both sides must then be integrated so that the tension becomes productive rather than unsolvable.⁵⁸ People differ in the degree to which they feel comfortable with and feed off dealing with tensions.⁵⁹ Research shows that a paradox mindset has a neurological foundation and that intelligence and personality play a role.⁶⁰ The ability to value, accept, and feel comfortable with contradictions seems to have a positive effect on people’s job performance and innovation. For those who find it more difficult to do so, however, contradictions can cause anxiety and trigger defense mechanisms.⁶¹ It is therefore not equally easy for everyone to foster a paradox mindset. Attention must also be paid to the affective or emotional response that people might experience.⁶² Officer candidates must learn how to deal with the fact that they do not feel comfortable and how they can effectively deal with the tensions experienced.⁶³

Research suggests that people are willing and able to develop a paradox mindset after experiencing and learning how they can deal with paradoxes differently and discovering the benefits of doing so.⁶⁴ This process requires the development of certain skills. Reflection and critical thinking are key to extracting the potential for synergy from fields of tension. In this connection, people must be able to reflect on simplified “either...or...” assumptions and look for alternatives.⁶⁵ Furthermore, rather than becoming anxious and responding defensively, they must be able to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity.⁶⁶ Style flexibility is an important foundation for being effective in interactions with others in the “playing field” of the two meta-paradoxes. For instance, it may at times be necessary to unilaterally opt for directive or forceful behavior, whereas innovation, for example, requires both participative or facilitative leadership behavior and leadership behavior that seeks to inspire or influence.⁶⁷ We believe that the interpersonal circumplex can serve as tool for officer candidates to develop style flexibility and become more aware of the “costs and benefits” of their behavior.⁶⁸ Officer candidates must also learn how they contribute to psychological safety in teams; in other words, how they contribute to an atmosphere in which team members express ideas, ask questions, admit mistakes, and learn together.⁶⁹

Instructors and trainers have a responsibility to guide officer candidates in dealing with fields of tension and to prevent these from being routinely suppressed or ignored. They can assist officer candidates in recognizing paradoxes, for example. It is also important to enable discussion about how officer candidates experience paradoxes that they face together. By giving meaning to and thinking about paradoxes together, officer candidates also learn how to deal with the tensions that paradoxes entail as a team. To familiarize officer candidates with the importance of both stability and flexibility, instructors could for instance have them draw up rules themselves and come up with exceptions to those rules at the same time.⁷⁰ There are still instructors who think that good leadership consists primarily of standing in front of the troops in a directive manner and telling others what to do. They do not fit in a training setting in which officer candidates are learning to develop adaptive leadership skills and a paradox mindset. This year, we started improving the guidance system within the Netherlands Defence Academy as part of a task force program. Special guidance officers will support instructors and trainers in providing guidance for officer candidates regarding their attitude and conduct. As a subsequent step, we will look at how we can incorporate a paradox approach.

Implications

In this section of the article, we consider the implications that we see in relation to the ambition of familiarizing officer candidates with paradoxes in leadership and thereby better preparing them to deal effectively with twenty-first century military challenges. First, we must accept that not everyone can learn everything. The extremes of the “playing field” are possibly the domain of specialists. Nevertheless, our position is that officer candidates should be given a solid foundation by being taught to make the greatest possible progress in the framework. We believe that a training environment is very suitable for building such a foundation for further development.

The second implication concerns, on the one hand, the available training time and, on the other, what is needed to enable officer candidates to become accustomed to dealing with complexity and the associated paradoxes. The question is: How much time is a military academy able to allocate to preparing future leaders for the unruly and complex reality in which they will be doing their jobs? Will there only be time for a few lectures and role-playing sessions, or will investment in modern leadership be a major theme throughout the entire training program?

The third implication concerns the required guidance and the organization of the training environment. It is not only about the content of the training program. This aspect would also ask a lot of the instructors, trainers, and leaders in the training environment. Military academies that are striving to invest in future-proof leaders cannot avoid the question as to which people are suitable in terms of guiding officer candidates and what they need in terms of education and training. First and foremost, these people need to have the ability to view both sides of a paradox simultaneously to the greatest extent possible and to recognize the unique characteristics of each side of a paradox. Drawing on paradox theory, we further argue that they would need to be able to foster and develop trust, openness, and cultural sensitivity in the training environment.⁷¹

The fourth implication relates to the role of followers. A paradox approach to leadership and dealing with the two adaptive meta-paradoxes require a great deal from leaders and followers alike. A paradox approach requires critical, active, and constructive followers who contribute and take responsibility for the form of leadership that is appropriate to what they have to achieve together in a certain context.⁷² Officer candidates must learn how they can effectively shape the follower role.⁷³

The fifth implication concerns the change that is required in a broad sense if we wish to teach officer candidates and starting officers how to deal with paradoxes to an optimum level. Within military organizations, there is usually an ideal image of action-oriented, decisive leaders who take the lead and show their subordinates the way. In junior leadership roles, this behavior has traditionally been expected, encouraged, and rewarded.⁷⁴ Leadership behaviors that are not in keeping with this image can be perceived as being of less value.⁷⁵ Military organizations as a whole will therefore have to embrace a broader view of leadership both as a formal position and as a collective process in which, in complex situations, the leader plays a more facilitating role. It must also be possible for a leader to step back at the right times in order to allow someone else to lead, during which time the leader follows.⁷⁶ What is unhelpful in this regard is that career prospects in military organizations seem to depend on how visible an individual is.⁷⁷ A broader view of leadership can be transferred to command and control (C2). Although the concept of mission command addresses aspects of the paradox framework, it seems still largely embedded in internally focused C2 doctrines and procedures geared towards combat operations. We argue that many armed forces face the challenge of giving shape to more agile C2 in order to provide a basis for other ways of fighting, dealing with complexity and integrating activities

during network cooperation with a diversity of both military and civilian partners. The shaping of both C2 and leadership, as we see it, should serve what people have to achieve within a certain context. This change in awareness also requires an effort from senior colleagues, who can lead by example and facilitate a paradox approach but who must also ensure that they do not unintentionally hinder the development of a paradox mindset in others. Indeed, it is even possible that senior colleagues could learn from starting officers who have developed a paradox approach.

As a final implication, we would like to point to the opportunity to build further upon the proposed adaptive paradox framework. At first glance, it may seem to relate to a confined and specific part of the leadership domain. The framework, however, does not only apply to a paradox mindset and dealing with paradoxes but also entails a modern perspective on the broad “playing field” of leadership. Therefore, we think it can provide a basis for developing a comprehensive skill set for leadership. As a starting point, one could explore and research which knowledge, skills and abilities are essential for effectiveness in each part of the “leadership playing field.” The next step could be to extend the findings to the domains of selection, education, and training.

Conclusion

Our goal in writing this article was to make the dynamics and complexity of the world around us more manageable for future military leaders. The foundation is that they learn to put the context first and do not get bogged down in set definitions and established views on leadership. Leadership and command and control will always need to be shaped appropriately in relation to new ways of fighting and in dynamic, complex, and networked contexts. A contingency approach (if... then...) is inadequate in this regard. Paradoxes are simply part of the 21st century and leadership is a phenomenon that entails a multiplicity of tensions. In our view, a paradox approach to leadership (both... and...) can better prepare officer candidates for those paradoxes and tensions, both now and in the near future. We must in any case prevent our junior leaders from being surprised, or even freezing, when they encounter paradoxes. A more positive approach is that it is beneficial to teach officer candidates how to use the added value of both sides of a paradox.

It is not our intention to disregard the importance of hierarchy and formal authority. On the contrary, we believe that they remain an effective foundation for military operations in many cases. Nevertheless, we consider it important for officer candidates to learn about and experience the limitations of hierarchy and formal authority. They must learn to consciously choose when to take the lead and when to deliberately mobilize others to contribute to leadership as a collective process. Such mobilization is essential in the case of complex issues that can only be resolved by experimenting and learning together. We believe that the added value of this article is rooted primarily in the paradox framework presented and the ensuing suggestions for leadership development at military academies. In our view, an ability on the part of officer candidates to handle paradoxes constructively and use them consciously touches on the core of future military leadership, namely dealing with dynamic and complex environments.

Lieutenant Colonel Martijn W. van Eetveldt (Royal Netherlands Army), MSc works at the Defence Leadership Center of Expertise of the Netherlands Defence Academy. After holding various positions as an officer in the logistics domain within the Royal Netherlands Army, he has been working as a military work and organizational psychologist since 2013. He has conducted morale surveys in Dutch units deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Mali as well as work experience surveys throughout the Netherlands armed forces. He started focusing on the subject of leadership in 2016. He mainly explores ways in which modern views on leadership and leadership theories can be applied in military practice. He can be reached at MW.v.Eetveldt@mindef.nl.

Major General Richard G. Oppelaar (Royal Netherlands Marine Corps), LL.M. is commandant of the Netherlands Defence Academy. He completed his Dutch law degree at Erasmus University Rotterdam. He has very broad experience in leadership positions. In his long career, he has been deployed to northern Iraq, Cambodia, Bosnia, southern Iraq, and Afghanistan. He served as battalion commander in southern Iraq and Afghanistan. He combined the position of director of Operations of the Royal Netherlands Navy with that of commander of the Netherlands Marine Corps. As director of operations within the Defence Staff, he was responsible for the deployment of Dutch troops at home and abroad. In his current position as commandant of the Netherlands Defence Academy, he is the principal advisor to the Netherlands chief of defence in the fields of leadership, officer training, and scientific education and research.

Peter Olsthoorn, Ph.D., is associate professor of military leadership and ethics at the Netherlands Defence Academy. Besides leadership and ethics, he lectures on armed forces and society, war and the media, and ethics and fundamental rights in the European Joint Master's Program in Strategic Border Management. His research focuses on topics such as military virtues, military medical ethics, armed drones, and the ethics of border guarding. His publications include *Military Ethics and Virtues: An Interdisciplinary Approach for the 21st Century* (Routledge, 2010) and *Honor in Political and Moral Philosophy* (State University of New York Press, 2015).

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CONTENTS

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