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### **Exploring the Character of the Military Leader: A Comparative Analysis of the U.S. and the Hellenic Armies**

June 2023

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Prepared for the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA 93943.

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## ABSTRACT

Character and leadership are inextricably linked, and this is especially true within the military. The purpose of this research is to focus on the character of the military leader. By employing a qualitative research approach and combining the content analysis and case studies methods, this study compares the U.S. and Hellenic armies with respect to character and character strengths, and explores how these strengths can be assessed and developed within the military environment. Additionally, this study juxtaposes these findings against the current academic literature on character in the domains of business and psychology. Our findings indicate that the two armies share similarities in their views on character strengths of their leaders, but they differ in their respective approaches to character assessment and development. However, the comparisons of our findings against the academic literature highlight room for improvement for both armies. For that reason, we provide specific recommendations for adoption by higher-level military leaders, including how the two armies can address disparities and other gaps in their concepts of character, how they can measure character, and what strategies they can implement for an effective character development process.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
ALDM	Army Leadership Development Model
CARS	Character Assessment Rating Scale
DA	Department of the Army
DLC	Developing Leaders of Character
EDM	Ethical Decision Making
GAT	Global Assessment Tool
HA	Hellenic Army
HAA	Hellenic Army Academy
HAGS	Hellenic Army General Staff
HGF	Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness
ILDPA	Individual Leadership Development Plan
LCIA	Leader Character Insight Assessment
LDIG	Leader Development Improvement Guide
MSAF	Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officers
OIC	Organizational Integrity and Courage
PDR	Periodic Development Review
PIE	Personal Integrity and Ethics
PLIS	Perceived Leader Integrity Scale
SF	Special Forces
VIA-IS	Virtual Inventory Assessment—Inventory of Strengths
WPLDS	West Point Leader Development System



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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

It is impressive to think about how old the concept of leadership is and how long it has been deemed necessary for military leaders to possess the appropriate character strengths that will allow them to inspire and lead others into battle. Homer, in his epics the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, provides us with eternal archetypes of some of such qualities as early as the eighth century B.C. For instance, he describes Agamemnon, the leader of the Achaean Greeks, who embodies justice and good judgment; Nestor, who incarnates wisdom; Achilles, the personification of valor; and Odysseus, who was a master of ingenuity and craftiness (Sarachek, 1968). Later in this study, we talk about almost all of these as modern military leaders' traits. The existence of these inner qualities as aspects of successful military leaders over the centuries gives special gravity to their significance.

The Hellenic Army gives special importance to the domain of leadership and has incorporated it as an academic subject in all classes of military academies and all pieces of training. Nonetheless, even though aspects of character such as morality, integrity, and courage are discussed directly and indirectly, character as a distinct concept is not discussed to the extent it should be. Other military forces, such as the U.S. Army, do explicate the various aspects of character in greater detail than does the Hellenic Army, yet a cursory review of doctrine, training, and educational materials from those military forces suggests that gaps in our understanding of character endure to this day. Thus, this research, motivated by these gaps, examines the concept of character as an aspect of the military leader.

In the management domain, the concept of character, and especially its correlation with competence, are indivisible aspects of leadership, yet for a long time, the topic has not been discussed (Sturm et al., 2017). Most research focused on what leaders do instead of who leaders are (Seijts et al., 2015). However, the collapse of several huge organizations due to the economic crisis in the 2000s (Wright & Goodstein, 2007) and past economic business scandals disrupted trust in leadership and public administration, and the



importance of character came to the surface. Character is generally viewed as an intra-individual phenomenon, and this is especially true in literature in the field of psychology. In the management and organizational behavior domain, more focus is placed on understanding the character of the manager/leader, and less on the character of followers.

Within the military domain, the concepts of character and leadership become even more complicated, primarily due to the challenging nature of the military profession. During times of peace, military life frequently involves extreme situations, and during times of war, the situation is even more harsh and complicated. In any case, military people must combine intellectual, physical, and psychological competencies to deal with the challenges of military life. Notably, for those in the military, there is the persistent possibility of death, which is nowhere in the management domain. Under these circumstances, military leaders must possess these competencies and be imbued with established values, ethics, and beliefs. Additionally, they must train their subordinates, inspire them, and infuse them with these values, too. The higher purpose of serving the country, rather than material exchanges, motivates military leaders and their subordinates. Concepts like faith, loyalty, obedience, trust, and sacrifice take on decidedly different meanings within the military context (Hellenic Army General Staff [HAGS], 2013; Department of the Army [DA], 2019a).

The Hellenic Army touches on the concept of the character of leaders only superficially, often confusing it with personality. It postulates relationships between character and ethics in general, war ethics, with the leaders' perceptions and competencies, but in essence, it does not prove this relation. As far as character development is concerned, within the Hellenic Army literature, the topic receives even more superficial treatment.

The U.S. Army discusses the leader character attribute concept within the attributes triptych "character-presence-intellect" and within the general framework of what a leader is, knows, and does while adhering to Army ethics. It defines character and provides, in short, the key character traits needed in leaders. However, there are some points worth noting about how character is discussed in this context. For instance, the U.S. Army addresses potential character qualities as aspects of the "present" and "intellect" attributes. Furthermore, the "duty" value motivates people to "do their best." This exhortation raises



questions. Additionally, U.S. Army doctrine does not discuss the extent to which character has an impact on the leaders themselves, their subordinates, and the military organization. Finally, it touches on the character development issue superficially and generally without giving specific directions on how the subordinate commands must work to develop the established leaders' character attributes. In other words, a review of U.S. Army doctrine leads one to believe that the organization is convinced that both character and leader development are important, yet the Army largely views both types of development as an individual responsibility; to the reader, the military organization itself seems removed from the process.

## **B. RESEARCH PURPOSE AND TARGET AUDIENCE**

This research addresses the role of character within the military leadership context by examining how character contributes to the emergence of the military leader. Throughout our study in the psychology and management domain as well as in the literature of the U.S. and Hellenic armies, respectively, we have identified several doctrinal lacunae in both organizations that should be addressed. While this research may, at times, focus more on the Hellenic military, we intend our results to be beneficial for both the Hellenic and U.S. armies, as well as the military context in general. Furthermore, an additional goal of this research is to identify a series of practical and actionable recommendations for how both militaries might improve character education and development in leaders.

## **C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research will answer the following research questions:

1. Based on the comparison between the U.S. and the Hellenic armies, what character strengths contribute to the emergence of an effective military leader?
2. How do the U.S. and the Hellenic armies approach the impact of the military leaders' character on their followers, the military organization—and even on themselves?



3. What tools do U.S and the Hellenic Armies use for the assessment and the development of character within the military context?

#### **D. METHODOLOGY**

We apply a qualitative research method throughout this thesis because doing so provides several ways for the researcher to explain specific concepts or phenomena (Flick, 2014). We approach our research questions by combining two qualitative methods—content analysis and case studies comparison. Through content analysis, we systematically analyze what U.S. and Hellenic armies’ publications emphasize in terms of the concept of character, the leader’s character strengths they consider meaningful, how they perceive the importance of character, and what tools they use for the assessment and development of their leaders’ character (Neuendorf, 2017). By using a case studies comparison, we consider the two armies as cases and compare them in these fields. Additionally, we compare each army against what exists in the literature related to business and psychology (Yin, 2018). Data have been collected from journal articles and books on psychology and management, as well as publications from the U.S. and Hellenic armies. Additionally, we have used two non-military books, which are taught in the Hellenic Military Academy.

Specifically, we first address the meaning of the concept of character. Then, we examine what character strengths may contribute to the emergence of a military leader. Later, we study how character may affect military leaders themselves, their followers, and the military organization as a whole. Finally, we examine how the character of military leaders can be assessed and developed.

#### **E. RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION**

This study’s purpose is to address the concept of character in leaders within the military environment. As far as the Hellenic Army is concerned, this study’s impact may be greater as we provide a new perspective on a concept that has been poorly understood and promulgated across the Hellenic Army so far. In the future, the Hellenic Army can use our results to revise the corresponding leadership publications. The U.S. Army, on the other hand, may benefit from this research as well, as we discuss some gaps in its literature and



give new perspectives on several issues by addressing those we consider worthy of attention and potential revision.

## **F. LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

First, this research discusses the leader character concept within the military context. Because of the specificities of this context, our results may not be useful to civilian organizations. Furthermore, we approach the issue of leader character from a general leadership perspective, and we purposefully do not dive into all types of leadership. Additionally, from a military standpoint, we examine what is available in the literature of the Hellenic and U.S. armies, so our perspective is based on our findings on these two armies. In other words, this thesis is narrowly focused, so it will undoubtedly lack some generalizability beyond the U.S. and Hellenic armies.

## **G. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

This thesis consists of four chapters. In the introduction chapter, we have given an overall view of the research. Chapter II contains a systematic literature review of three pillars for the research: psychology and management literature, U.S. Army literature, and Hellenic Army literature. In Chapter III, we combine our two qualitative methods—content analysis and case studies comparison—and analyze what the U.S. and the Hellenic armies’ publications emphasize in terms of the research questions and compare each army against what exists in the academic literature on the concept of character. Additionally, we make some recommendations to both armies. Finally, in Chapter IV, we summarize our work, answer the research questions and provide proposals for future research on the discussed concept.

## **H. SUMMARY**

In this chapter, we introduced the topic of our research. This is the contribution of the concept of character to the emergence of a military leader. Moreover, we addressed the causes that led us to bring it up by providing a brief literature review. Then, we provided the research questions that this study intends to answer and the method we are going to follow to do so. Additionally, we pointed out its contribution and the audiences that it



targets, providing, at the same time, the existing limitations. Finally, we broke down the structure of this study.



## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the concept of character by comparing the perspectives of psychology and management to the viewpoints of the U.S. Army and the Hellenic Army. Initially, we approach the concept of character in general. We scan the existing definitions and distinguish *character* from similar terms. Then, using two basic character classifications found in the literature, we determine what character strengths are meaningful in these two military organizations. Later, we examine the influence of character strengths among leaders at all levels: individual, team, and organizational. Driven by this influence, we examine what exists in the literature in terms of the challenging process of character development. Finally, since assessment is the primary prerequisite of character development, we also provide character assessment tools described in the literature.

### A. CHARACTER IN THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

This section examines the concept of character from a foundational point of view. In particular, we examine how the literature of various fields defines character, what its fundamental aspects are, and how literature distinguishes character from similar terms. Then, we examine character strengths through the two repetitively met structures: the classification of character strengths of Peterson and Seligman (2004) and the character dimensions of Crossan et al. 2017. Finally, we present the most prominent character assessment tool, which is VIA-IS, along with several character development tools that academic literature provides us, especially in the educational domain.

#### 1. The Concept of Character

In the field of leadership, *character* is often taken for granted (Sarros & Cooper, 2006). Moreover, often leaders, even though they agree on the importance of character, do not discuss or use it in practice (Seijts et al., 2015). Additionally, because of the complexity of the character concept, there are a plethora of definitions and character constructs (Conger & Hollenbeck, 2010). Finally, the term “character” is used in the literature



interchangeably with the terms “virtue,” “values,” and “personality.” However, as we discuss later, these terms do not always have the same meaning.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) defines character as “the sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race, viewed as a homogenous whole; the individuality impressed by nature and habit on man or nation; a mental or moral constitution” (p. 31). According to another definition, character is “those interpenetrable and habitual qualities within individuals, and applicable to organizations that both constrain and lead them to desire and pursue personal and societal good” (Wright & Quick, 2011, p. 976). Wright and Lauer (2013) echo the perspective of William James who advocated that character consists of the “particular mental and moral attitudes that leave one feeling most deeply and intensely vibrant and alive” (p. 26), while Sosik and Cameron (2010) similarly consider character as “inherent moral beliefs, intentions, and predispositions” (p. 251). Bass and Bass (2009) and Hannah and Jennings (2013) focus on defining the character of a leader. The first argue that the “character of a leader involves his or her ethical and moral beliefs, intentions and behaviors” (p. 219). The latter authors perceive the character of a leader as a “purposeful and principled moral self that reflects the values, principles, ideals of—and duties and obligations to—the collective to which the leader belongs” (p. 9.). While we observe that there are several definitions of character, there are some common points of reference among them. Character is a habitual internal quality that may refer to individuals or entities and which has a moral aspect.

As far as the distinction among the terms “character,” “virtues,” “values,” and “personality” are concerned, Crossan et al. (2010) argue that those terms are closely related to each other and sometimes overlap, concluding that character is a compilation of values, virtues, and traits. Wright and Lauer (2013) perceive personality as a quality that makes people behave in particular ways. With respect to values, Wright and Goodstein (2007) contend that values are inherent beliefs based on personal or social standards about a specific way of conduct being more desirable than another. Additionally, they claim that values, unlike character, are not attached to moral standards. Moreover, they argue that character escapes the individual context and includes the social context, too, while values do not. Seijts et al. (2015) consider virtues the praiseworthy displayed behaviors on a



specific occasion; personality traits the innate qualities that incline people to behave in certain ways; and values the principles that predispose people, from the moral perspective, to what is good or illicit. Consequently, we see that character is similar to the other terms but also different in some ways. It is something inside of each person that is based on moral principles and has the potential to help the social good.

Hartman (2006) discusses an Aristotelian approach to the concept of character. He advocates that “good character” is a matter of individuals’ actions and their feelings for those actions. To support this argument, he uses the term “imagination” (*phantasia*), meaning that individuals must morally interpret and understand their manifestations using rationality and cleverness. Hannah and Avolio (2010) give a similar approach by introducing the term “moral potency.” This is the psychological state in which individuals are held accountable for ethical actions; they are confident, believe in the moral purpose, and have the courage to act accordingly. In the same context, Wright and Lauer (2013) and Quick and Wright (2011) discuss Hunter’s (2008) three elements of character. The most fundamental is “moral discipline,” the individual’s capability to self-regulate against his or her wills and desires within a moral frame for the social good. The second is “moral attachment,” which reflects individuals’ dedication to this effort. Finally, there is “moral autonomy,” or an individual’s ability to make ethical decisions based on his or her free will. Overall, we observe not only the repetitive moral aspect of character but also that it is the individual’s responsibility to comprehend and uphold this moral aspect.

Crossan et al. (2010) address the pillars that form effective leaders: competencies, character, and commitment. Character occupies a prominent position among them, as it defines how leaders perceive situations and react to them. According to Crossan et al. (2010), the leaders’ competencies are significant, as they provide leaders with the appropriate knowledge, background, and skills. On the other hand, commitment is also important, as it enables leaders to adhere to their mission and fulfill their role according to the established expectations. Sturm et al. (2017) focus on the terms “character” and “competence.” They support the idea that these terms are both discussed in the most well-known leadership theories. However, the distinction between them is not always clear. The authors acknowledge that competence itself is positively linked with performance, but they



highlight the tight interconnection between character and competence, which drives leaders to display the highest performance. Additionally, they provide three degrees of character—competency entanglement. First is the “no entanglement” degree, where even though leaders are highly skilled, they lack character development. Second, the “low entanglement” degree is where character and competencies co-exist but are not interconnected. As a result, leaders manifest either of them according to the circumstances. Finally, in the “high entanglement” case, leaders are characterized by a strong bond (not just coexistence) between character strengths and powerful skills. Overall, we can conclude that even though character is a significant attribute, it should be tightly related to competence for the individual’s best performance.

Wright and Lauer (2013) and Quick and Wright (2011) address the concepts of “values-based” and “character-based” leadership. The character-based leader embodies all the previously mentioned character dimensions: moral discipline, autonomy, and attachment. Moreover, this model embodies the principles of values-based leadership, which emphasize individual opinions and beliefs. As a result, the character-based leader introduces a moral approach whose ultimate purpose is improving both individuals and social groups. Hannah and Jennings (2013) also bring up the social dimension of character. The authors distinguish between the “Big-C” and “little-c” forms of character. They correlate “little-c” character with individual moral character traits, such as being honest and fair. By contrast, they highlight and emphasize the “Big-C” character, which does not remain at the individual level. Instead, it is broader and includes the social dimension as well. So, individuals’ character qualities do not only benefit themselves but also benefit the individual’s social context.

So far, we have taken a foundational approach to the concept of character and distinguished it from similar terms. Through several definitions, we saw that it is an individual’s internal quality, of which the moral dimension is significant. Individuals have an active role in shaping character. If they accept that responsibility, they will benefit both themselves and the social group they belong to. But character itself is not enough. Its combination with competence is what will lead to the individual’s best performance. In the next section, we get deeper into character by addressing the topic of character strengths.



## 2. Character Strengths

In this section, we discuss the topic of character strengths mainly through two primary constructs that are addressed repeatedly in the literature. Additionally, we study which character strengths are significant for leaders both in general and in the military context. We also highlight the significance of the “virtuous mean.”

Along with the character-based leadership model, Wright and Lauer (2013) introduce the “profiles in character” concept, profiling the top five character strengths for several occupations. They consider the following as the top five character strengths for occupations necessary in extreme situations, such as the military: *valor*, *integrity*, *industry*, *critical thinking*, and *self-regulation*. Hannah and Avolio (2011b) refer to the same concept as “character signatures.” They contend those unique “character signatures” of leaders spread across all existing leadership theories. In both works, the authors point out that character is fundamental for leaders to function in extreme conditions, especially those in which lives may be at stake.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) provide a comprehensive sum of 24 character strengths. These strengths are incorporated into six virtues, which are characteristics based on surveys over the years and the evolutionary process. Character strengths are “positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They exist in degrees and can be measured as individual differences” (Park et al., 2004, p. 603). In addition, they are the individuals’ “psychological ingredients—processes or mechanisms—that define virtues” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 13). Peterson and Seligman (2004) also introduce a third concept called “themes.” Themes refer to customs that drive people to manifest specific character strengths according to their circumstances, such as family or work themes. For each character strength, the authors provide a thorough analysis along with ways of measuring and developing them. A table summarizing Peterson and Seligman’s combination of virtues and the corresponding character strengths is provided in Appendix A.

Crossan et al. (2017) provide us with a leadership character model, as shown in Figure 1. This model is based on their research on business staff, practitioners, and MBA



students with experience in leadership. It depicts the dimensions of a leader’s character and their corresponding elements. One noteworthy aspect of this model is that it depicts these dimensions as being interrelated. Another important point is the central role of practical wisdom, or judgment, which regulates and triggers the appropriate dimension for the corresponding occasion. The depicted dimensions are defined in Appendix B.



Figure 1. Character Dimensions and Associated Elements.  
Source: Crossan et al. (2017).

While the basic constructs just described provide us with an overall picture of character strengths, other researchers approach character strengths through a specifically moral lens. First, Thompson et al. (2008) introduce a character construct that has three branches: the Personal Integrity and Ethics (PIE) branch, which in turn consists of the elements of *personal integrity*, *ethics*, and *openness*; the Organizational Integrity and Courage (OIC) branch, which raises the expectations about leaders’ *integrity* even more, bringing up their personal *accountability* not only for themselves but for the organizations as well; and the Humility, Gratitude, and Forgiveness (HGF) branch. This branch emphasizes that leaders should not behave or act in a self-centered way. In another

construct, Becker (1998) focuses on and emphasizes the character trait of *integrity* as an indispensable aspect of leaders' morality and organizational trust. The structural element of integrity is rationality, the acceptance and invocation of reason as our actions' supreme value and regulator. In this sense, integrity is defined as "the principle of being principled, practicing what one preaches regardless of emotional or social pressure, and not allowing any irrational consideration to overwhelm one's rational convictions" (p. 157). However, the author highlights that integrity does not force individuals to stick to rational rules. On the contrary, they are morally obliged to change depending on their knowledge and for a good purpose. Grahek et al. (2010) discuss the character strength of integrity from the leadership perspective. Their study revealed that leaders consider integrity as fundamental for the execution of their roles, along with decision-making skills. Furlong et al. (2017), to highlight the crucial role of integrity, quotes Warren Buffet: "Somebody once said that in looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if you don't have the first, the other two will kill you" (p. 220). We observe that the literature emphasizes the character strength of integrity. It is a significant and indispensable aspect not only of a leader's character but of everyone's character.

Yet, the literature discusses other character strengths as well, outside specific constructs. Anderson and Anderson (2016) focus on six character strengths, which, they contend, may improve individuals' lives personally and professionally. Those are, in order of priority, *courage*, *humility*, *integrity*, *selflessness*, *duty*, and *positivity*. According to the authors, *courage* and *humility* are fundamental prerequisites for the other four. Otherwise, the other four strengths may not always be a stable part of the individual's character and may need to be adjusted depending on the circumstances. Bass and Bass (2009), in the same context, argue that the foundational character values of a leader are *integrity*, *trust*, *truth*, and *human dignity*. Moving to the military sector, the Australian Army Special Forces (SF) studied the reasons why they had high attrition rates in the first week of SF courses. In this research, a sample of SF applicants answered the Virtue Inventory Assessment-Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) questionnaire. The research showed that the top-ranked character strengths of successful applicants were *teamwork*, *integrity*, and



*persistence*. Overall, the authors concluded that character strengths are crucial for succeeding in these challenging types of training (Gayton & Kehoe, 2015).

We consider it important to refer to the virtuous mean issue as well. First introduced by Aristotle (*mesotita* in Hellenic), it is the ideal state between deficiency and excess on a particular dimension of character. Otherwise, the character strengths become vices (Moskovitis, 1993). Using Peterson and Seligman's classification, Crossan et al. (2013) provide examples of virtuous mean character strengths in accordance with the Aristotelian perspective, as shown in Appendix C. For example, in excess, the character strength of *bravery* becomes *recklessness*, whereas with deficiency becomes *cowardice*.

In this section, we have provided several perspectives on leaders' character strengths. These character strengths are positive attributes by which leaders define themselves in the outside world. *Integrity* is the character strength that appears most frequently in the literature. *Courage* is also often addressed, as well as character strengths related to morality, such as *accountability*, *ethics*, *trust*, and *dignity*. For military leaders, besides *integrity* and *courage*, the addressed character strengths are *industry*, *critical thinking*, *self-regulation*, *teamwork*, and *persistence*. However, according to the Aristotelian perspective, these character strengths should be manifested within the virtuous mean. Either excess or deficiency in displaying them is a vice for the individuals.

### **3. The Importance of Character**

Pivoting toward the importance of character, we study in this section what the literature says about the impact of the leader's character on his or her followers, the entire organization, and even the individual leaders themselves.

Often, the literature correlates specific character strengths with specific styles of leadership. Sosik and Cameron (2010) consider the character strengths of *wisdom*, *courage*, *humanity*, *justice*, *temperance*, and *transcendence* as fundamental for the emergence of transformational leaders. These inspiring leaders influence and motivate their followers and can shape individuals and organizations. Furthermore, the character strengths of *humility*, *empathy*, and *moral courage* contribute to the formation of ethical leaders. Finally, Monzani et al. (2021) correlate the strength of *self-awareness* with authentic



leadership, which is an aspect of leadership that focuses on the internal part of the leader (Northouse, 2022).

The literature also highlights the positive impact of character on the individual. Wright and Lauer (2013) consider character strengths as fundamental for an individual's well-being. Seijts et al. (2015) make more particular observations, stating that character shapes people's mindset, how they interact with each other, and their actions, a position with which Wright and Huang (2008) also agree. Additionally, Seijts et al. (2015) highlight the foundational importance of character for decision making, too; specifically, Nguyen and Crossan (2022) include ethical decision-making (EDM). Moreover, Seijts et al. (2022) address another aspect of the significance of character, supporting the idea that character strengths define how individuals respond to challenges or adversarial situations. Their study indicates that character strengths are strongly correlated with undergraduate students' well-being and that they contribute to them managing of stress of any kind. It is obvious that the positive impact of character on individuals is multi-dimensional.

Moreover, the significance of character transcends the individual level. The positive impact extends to others as well. Monzani et al. (2021) claim that the character dimensions and the subsequent elements presented in Figure 1 affect the followers of positive leaders. For instance, by displaying *self-awareness*, leaders can realize the impact of their behaviors on their followers. Or by displaying *resilience* in tough situations, they can affect their followers by not giving up and dealing with any kind of challenges. Second, leaders' character strengths make followers more efficient in their work. For example, traits such as *integrity*, *accountability*, or *teamwork*, contribute to organizational commitment, which improves the followers' work effectiveness. Additionally, leaders' *presence*, and the subsequent direction and support in their followers' execution of duties (work engagement), improve the latter's performance significantly. Finally, Sosik et al. (2019) comment that *self-control* functions as a regulator between the leader and the potential outcomes for both the leader and the follower.

Individuals' "good character" affects the workplace, too. Gander et al. (2012) argue that character strengths, such as *curiosity*, *zest*, *hope*, *gratitude*, and *religiousness*, are strongly related to job satisfaction; *zest* contributes to both work and life satisfaction. In



the same field, Harzer and Ruch (2015) underline the strong relationship between intellectual character strengths (from the VIA-IS pool) and coping at work and reducing work-related stress. Moreover, Avey et al. (2012) add that the character strengths included in virtue of wisdom (Appendix A) lead to lower stress levels as well as higher work performance. Harzer and Ruch (2014) also discuss the contribution of character strengths to task performance. Those authors support that the character strengths of *perseverance*, *teamwork*, *honesty*, *prudence*, and *self-regulation* are related to task performance, whereas *perseverance*, *bravery*, *self-regulation*, *curiosity*, and *love of learning* contribute to job dedication.

The literature expands even more on the significance of leaders' character at the organizational level. Wright and Goodstein (2007) use Peterson and Seligman's classification of character strengths to support the idea that *zest*, *hope*, and *fairness* are foundational to organizational well-being. Moreover, Seijts et al. (2019) highlight the importance of a leader's character in both board governance and organizational effectiveness. However, they find that the boards either approach the topic of character superficially or discuss it in more depth only after a negative incident has happened. Whenever it is discussed, though, the board members emphasize mostly the character traits of *judgment* first and foremost, followed by *integrity*, *accountability*, *authenticity*, and *transparency*. Moreover, the directors who participated in the study highlighted the primary reasons why the issue of character is not discussed in the workplace. Those were the subjectivity of the topic, their disbelief that character is correlated with organizational performance, and the absence of valid character assessment tools in their organizations. All in all, we observe here a contradiction: Even though character strengths have a positive impact on organizations, the boards do not give character the importance it requires.

Crossan et al. (2022) go further on this topic, stating that if organizations do not recognize the impact of leaders' character on the organization's prosperity, healthy culture, and well-being, and if they do not adopt the appropriate practices at all levels for incorporating character perceptions into their practices, the most qualified staff may leave the organization. By "character perceptions," they mean that organization leaders understand the character dimensions, as presented in Figure 1, know that they are



interconnected, and know how to formulate ways to develop them. Furthermore, Crossan et al. (2022) correlate character with organizational learning. More specifically, individuals of strong character are ideally expected to manifest sound judgment, as shown in Appendix B and Figure 1. That means that individuals can display any of the appropriate character dimensions at any given time and on any occasion based on the judgment of the individual. In addition, they are expected to support effective learning to any degree, whether individual, group, or organizational, and in any flow, feedforward or feedback.

The importance of character in leadership is not without controversy. Conger and Hollenbeck (2010) argue that character may be perceived differently from situation to situation or from organization to organization. Moreover, the quality of the character itself is not enough and should be accompanied by the corresponding competence. In the same logic, Hunter (2008), when discussing the connection between morality and character, claims that each culture may have diverse moral perceptions and character manifestations and, therefore, have different expectations for individuals.

As we saw in this section, character may positively affect leaders' minds, their decision making, and several aspects of their private and professional life. Moreover, a leader's character has a strong positive impact on his or her followers. Leaders may set a good example and help their followers to deal with challenging situations. Additionally, they can contribute to the improvement of the followers' performance. But the significance of character does not stop there; it extends to the organizational level, too. The literature says that leaders' character positively influences organizational effectiveness and well-being, pointing out at the same time corporate boards' tendency to ignore this positive impact. Yet, character is not a panacea. Differences in cultures and circumstances may diminish the impact of character. Since the significance of character is obvious and multidimensional, it is now appropriate to address the development of character.

#### **4. The Development of Character**

So far, we have outlined the various concepts of character, character strengths, and their importance. In this section, we examine whether character can be developed and, if so, in what ways that can be achieved.



Quick and Wright (2011) strongly believe that character can be developed, as does Crossan et al. (2013). Additionally, they provide three levels of leadership as a ground for the individual's character development and solid performance: the *leadership of self*, which deals with the leaders' improvement as individuals; the *leadership of others*, which helps leaders to be effective in inspiring, directing, and motivating others; and the *leadership of the organization*, which speaks to the leaders' ability to deal with the inanimate parts of the organization. Byrne et al. (2018) also answer positively to the character development question, stating that, besides the differences, the only ideas that literature agrees on are that character exists inside individuals, is separate from values and personality traits, has a moral aspect, and can be developed. However, the authors continue arguing that character development is not easy for several reasons. First, people have predisposed concepts and knowledge about leadership, which usually do not include the concept of character. Second, character is conceivable only through an individual's behavior. Finally, the character issue is very personal, so through its development process, some people may resist it. This discussion is important because it indicates that there is no doubt that character can be developed. On the other hand, it indicates the multi-dimensional and challenging aspect of the character development process.

Beyond the answer to this main question, the literature also examines *how* character can be developed. Hartman (2006) and Crossan et al. (2013) adopt the Aristotelian theory on this issue, which supports that character is developable progressively through environmental experience. Hannah and Avolio (2011) also highlight the importance of everyday experiences. They claim that these experiences shape individuals' perspectives and make them more cognitively and morally mature. That way, individuals are able to assess themselves and their effect on others. According to Seijts et al. (2015), character development is a lifelong process where leaders must focus on "goal setting, deliberate practice, and reflection" (p. 71). Hunter (2008) makes this argument more specific. Even though he agrees that character may be developed throughout life, he contends that "moral culture" may play an important role in character formation. The reason is that individuals are strongly affected by their surrounding cultures, whether family, public life, or whoever establishes normative orders they may follow. The dominant culture may sometimes have



an advantage, but that does not mean that individuals are unaffected by alternative subcultures. As a result, the fundamental mechanism for character development is “moral instruction,” which is impacting cultural norms to individuals. Hannah and Avolio (2011) support the same idea, stating that groups and the existing collective moral norms highly influence the individual’s character. As a result, the organizational culture is crucial because it shapes the collective structures and characters, which in turn affect the character of individuals in the organization. So, organizations can use the social learning method to diffuse their shared perspectives on character and the corresponding actions they expect from individuals. Kouzes and Posner (2005) also highlight the importance of organizational culture and suggest that leaders keep its significance in their minds and endeavor to build organizations with a solid ethos. All in all, we conclude that everyday experiences are crucial in the character development process. This highlights the significance of the organizational culture, as this culture indicates the organization’s character, which in turn shapes the individual’s character.

Another way that character can be developed is through education and training. Wright (2015) addresses the 3-H model for leaders’ character development process. By that, he suggests that business schools should focus not only on what promotes intellectual competencies in future leaders (the head) but also on how they feel (the heart) and how they actually behave (the hand). In the same context, Byrne et al. (2018) provide two foundational teaching tools for business schools developing character in leaders. The first tool is experience gained through crucible moments; the second is critical reflections. The authors consider crucible experiences as those which are so intense that they challenge an individual’s values and judgment and even change his or her identity. On the same topic, Bennis and Thomas (2002) define crucible experiences as “transformative experiences through which an individual comes to a new or an altered sense of identity” (p. 40). Those adversities make individuals stronger. Conger and Hollenbeck (2010) add that crucible experiences may be difficult to implement in the management domain, but they definitely can be in the military. However, Gandz et al. (2013) point out that in order for those experiences to have a positive and substantial effect on individuals’ character, some degree of *humility* and *self-awareness* must already exist in individuals. Additionally, Lester



(2021) extends this concept even further, referring to “institutionalized crucible events” (p. 62). He states that because crucible experiences can have a significant transformative impact on individuals, they must take place in a controlled environment inside the organization in order to be effective. Otherwise, there is a risk for individuals to experience stress and trauma. So, schools can shape individuals’ character, and crucible experiences are a powerful tool for that. However, such experiences should be used with caution.

Reflections and feedback are critical tools, too. Byrne et al. (2018) argue that through reflections, leaders can evaluate themselves in terms of their character manifestation, ideally after experiencing crucible moments. Crossan et al. (2013) consider this tool powerful and add that it improves students’ *self-awareness*. In the same spirit, Sosik and Cameron (2010) emphasize the importance of life experiences, reflection, and listening to others’ opinions and critiques for the leader’s success. On the other side, Byrne et al. (2018) address formal feedback as a tool for business students’ character development. This feedback should come from all directions, especially from faculty after team assignments. All these tools are integrated into the broader character training mechanisms of *assimilation*, *accommodation*, and *equilibration*. In assimilation, individuals perceive external stimulations and transform them into schemata based on their already existing perceptions; in accommodation, individuals transform those assimilated schemata into new ones after the intake of new experiences; the equilibration keeps the balance between those two. Following that learning process, leaders may realize the value of character in practice and be able to reflect on it (Byrne et al., 2018).

Staying at the educational level, Crossan et al. (2013) argue that case studies are a powerful tool for character development. Case studies engage students actively and improve their decision-making skills, a view which Hill and Stewart (1999) also support. Through case studies, the students improve their critical thinking and, individually and in teams, can detect hidden ethical dilemmas. Further, students can examine the existing character values, seek all possible solutions, and study the consequences of the actions. Hartman (2006) addresses the issue using an Aristotelian term. In particular, he advocates that the students, in order to meet the case studies requirements, must practice their “practical wisdom.” Wright (2015) uses Bandura’s modeling framework (Bandura, 1977)



to address another character development method: role-playing. The author argues that this tool enables students to be active organisms instead of being passive and just reacting to the existing stimuli. Crossan et al. (2013) also discuss role-playing as a tool, advocating for its use in the context of a simulation. They support the idea that it helps students to experience challenges and biases, test their reactions and subsequent character manifestations, and judge themselves as a whole in the corresponding situation. Hill and Stewart (1999) address some other tools for character education in business schools. The first is collaborative learning. Through this, students develop various character strengths in responding to teamwork challenges. Additionally, there is service learning. Students participating in activities such as volunteer work learn how virtues and values are actively implemented.

The literature also discusses mentoring as a tool in the character development process. Crossan et al. (2013) consider it powerful as mentors, by sharing their cumulative knowledge and their real-world experiences of any kind, may exert a determining effect on young leaders. Moreover, students may establish long-term relationships with their mentors. Similarly, Hill and Stewart (1999) state that mentors can support students not only by improving their skills but also by working as role models to them, thereby shaping their character. For these reasons, Quick and Wright (2011) claim that leaders may endeavor to find good-character role models in their work environment. However, there is something akin to a trap here as mentors, role models, or professors must act in concordance with what they teach, as failing to do so can have dire consequences on students' character development process (Hill & Stewart, 1999).

But there are a few more pedagogical tools that schools can use to develop their students' character. Wright (2015) suggests the use of character-related vocabulary in business classes as an efficient tool for character development. This position is shared by Crossan et al. (2017), who state that the discussion of the character dimensions structure in business schools and workplaces not only makes complex and vague terms clear but also provides leaders with the appropriate vocabulary. Using this language in any workplace is critical for instilling the corresponding concepts. Moreover, Hill and Stewart (1999) address character education through narratives, such as books or movies. The thorough



study of those materials helps students identify and analyze existing character structures. All in all, we observe that schools have plenty of tools to cultivate students' character. Given the plethora of tools, Crossan et al. (2013) suggest that leaders' character must be taught both as a distinct, dedicated course and as part of all kinds of other courses, such as accounting or finance.

Crossan et al. (2013) expand the discussion beyond the level of the student to the character development of faculty. They advocate that faculties must also deal with character improvement. Specifically, reflection, collective learning groups, and establishing core organizational character structures are useful tools for improving the character strengths of faculty members; hence they will be able, morally and substantially, to teach and inspire their students accordingly.

Finally, Anderson and Anderson (2016) discuss a specific character development process. Initially, the authors highlight the divergent perspectives of Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle on the issue of character development. According to the authors, Plato claimed that character development occurs through our thoughts and knowledge, whereas Aristotle believed that it occurs through our habits (*ethos*). From this point of view, and combining those perspectives, the authors present a five-step process for leaders' character development: It starts with their *thoughts*, which affect their *words*, which drive leaders to take *actions*, which, if repeated continually, become *habits*, and these habits shape *character*.

All in all, the literature agrees that character can be developed at all levels. Everyday experiences, especially the challenging (crucial) ones in an institutional environment, are a significant factor in that process, as is the collective or organizational culture. However, education plays a leading role in character development. Tools such as individual reflection, multi-dimensional feedback, case studies, collaborative learning, and role-playing can shape individuals' character. Mentoring is crucial, too, as it channels the cumulative experience and knowledge to the young generation. But even simple actions such as the use of character-related vocabulary in schools and workplaces can contribute significantly to this process. Finally, the thoughts–words–actions–habits–character



sequence shows that character development is a complicated and detailed process that demands a combination of training and individual responsibility.

## **5. The Assessment of Character**

Character development may not be effective or even possible without measuring character first. This character assessment process provides data about individuals' character strengths. Based on these data, individuals or organizations can establish a character development process or policy.

Character assessment is significant for organizations. Seijts et al. (2020) assert that the establishment of a character-based leadership assessment method by senior leaders will model the expected corresponding behaviors all the way down the hierarchy. The authors also see the issue from the other side, stating that the absence of character assessment, especially in the recruiting process, will cost the organization both in lost productivity and involvement in legal cases. Following the same logic, Gandz et al. (2013) advocate that it is fundamental for the organization's senior leaders to be selected not only based on their skills but also on the results of a character evaluation. Seijts et al. (2017) echo the view that character assessment begins in the hiring process, and they provide several tools for that purpose, such as questions about individuals' backgrounds; reference checking, which verifies their accountability; and interviews. So, we can conclude that mere character assessment is not enough. Time matters. The earlier the organization assesses individuals' character, the better.

Wright (2015) becomes more specific in terms of character assessment. He addresses the VIA-IS character assessment tool (Peterson & Seligman, n.d.). This is a questionnaire that consists of 240 items. The respondents answer questions, assessing themselves on a scale of 1 ("very much unlike me") to 5 ("very much like me"). The questionnaire is based on Peterson and Seligman's taxonomy (2004). However, Wright (2015) argues that this assessment tool should not be used on its own. After having filled out this questionnaire, he suggests that individuals should get feedback on the results from their instructor, for instance, and then be engaged in a group discussion on these results.



Gander et al. (2012) provide us with additional information on the VIA-IS tool. They identify the VIA-IS's five types of internal strengths of individuals: emotional (e.g., love), interpersonal (e.g., citizenship), intellectual (e.g., perspective), theological (e.g., spirituality), and strengths of restraint (e.g., persistence).

The VIA-IS is a basic and the most widely discussed character assessment tool, but it is not the only one. Barlow et al. (2003) introduce the *Character Assessment Rating Scale (CARS)*. It consists of 12 character dimensions, which in turn are assessed on a scale from 0 (zero) to eight (8), as shown in Appendix G. Crossan et al. (2022) discuss the Leader Character Insight Assessment (LCIA) (SIGMA Assessment Systems, n.d.). This tool can identify the individual's key character dimensions, corresponding elements, and ways for character development. Meanwhile, Craig and Gustafson (1998) focus on the assessment of the ethical integrity character trait. They consider it fundamental for leaders; additionally, they say that it is closely connected to the charismatic/transformational aspect of leadership. Their study provides a measurement tool for this aspect, the *Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS)*. It is filled out by subordinates with respect to their immediate supervisor. Details on this instrument are provided in Appendix F. Finally, Peterson and Park (2006) suggest general tools, as shown in Table 1, for measuring character strengths, considering that they promise reliable results:

Table 1. Character Development Measures.  
Adapted from Peterson and Park (2006).

	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>a</b>	Focus groups	To extracts the meaning of character strengths of individuals from different groups
<b>b</b>	Self-Report Questionnaires	Like VIA-VS
<b>c</b>	Structured Interviews	-
<b>d</b>	Informant Reports	To show whether individuals exhibit specific character strengths under specific occasions
<b>e</b>	Case Studies	Coming from distinguished examples who displayed specific strengths



Of course, the character assessment process is not without challenges. Gandz et al. (2013) point out the difficulty of the process, arguing that the only way for an individual's character to be assessed is through his or her behavior. Focusing on the personnel selection process, the authors claim that, ideally, a complete character assessment process would involve a thorough investigation of the individual's past for a sufficient period, including both the individual's personal and professional lives. But the authors state that this is impossible to achieve. However, according to them, what is attainable is that the candidates will be asked about how they have behaved or would behave in specific situations during this process. Finally, Conger and Hollenbeck (2010) also challenge the character assessment process. They claim that although there are several tools for assessing character, like the Leadership Virtues Questionnaire or 360-degree feedback, in most cases, these tools are focused on the desirable positive character strengths, thereby refusing to admit the existence of the negative side of character.

In summary, the concept of character is extensively discussed in the domains of psychology and especially in the business domain, which mainly focuses on the character of the leader. The literature provides several definitions of character. These definitions agree on the internal nature of character in individuals and on its moral dimension. However, character should be combined with competence, which will lead to the individual's best performance. This combination may benefit both individuals and organizations. Additionally, the literature addresses several character constructs containing specific character strengths. *Integrity* and *courage/valor* strengths are strongly related to military leaders. These character strengths significantly impact leaders' followers, collective structures, and the leaders themselves. Since the leader's character is so important, the question then is how it can be developed. The literature discusses this issue extensively as well; it is a complicated process. There are several tools in the education process, but everyday experiences, especially challenging ones, play a prominent role in character development. They adjust individuals' actions and habits and shape their character that way. There are several tools described in the business literature regarding the character assessment process. Even though there are existing deficiencies in these tools, they can still provide a good picture of the individual or the organization in terms of



character strengths. Subsequently, results from these tools can be used for character development, individually or collectively.

## **B. CHARACTER IN U.S. ARMY LITERATURE**

The U.S. Army policy and doctrine discusses the character concept extensively. As described below, the Army Leadership Development Model (ALDM) provides us with several character strengths that it considers significant for its leaders. However, the ALDM and other U.S. Army publications described in this section address the assessment and development of character mostly through the leader development process.

### **1. The Concept of Character**

The U.S. Army addresses character in several doctrines, regulations, field manuals, training circulars, pamphlets, techniques, and memoranda (Licameli, 2016). Mainly, it discusses the concept of character through the Army ethic and the ALDM construct. The Army considers character as part of the leader's nature (DA, 2019a) and connects it strongly with moral principles and Army values. A leader's character is significant as it substantially affects how he or she leads. Leaders must lead by example, and character plays a crucial role in that process.

Initially, the U.S. Army addresses the concept of character in the Army Doctrine Publication (ADP)-1 (2019), seeing character as an aspect of the "lead," which is one of the five objectives of the Army's vision accomplishment. Moreover, this doctrine, along with the Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22 (2012), introduces the concept of "leaders of character." These are the leaders who are imbued with the Army values and display morality in all circumstances (DA, 2012b). Furthermore, ADRP 6-22 (2012) discusses a more general term, that of "people of character" who seek to perform ethically on any given occasion. Finally, ADRP-1 (2015) refers to "professionals of character" and associates them with the trait of *honor*. Additionally, the doctrine argues that it is part of stewardship for leaders to develop the character of their subordinates so that everybody adheres to the Army ethic. Notably, there is one concept that appears repeatedly in several U.S. Army publications; this is the concept of "character—competence—commitment." Contemporary leaders and soldiers should meet these



standards so that they can fulfill their duties, express the Army ethic, and be considered Army professionals (DA, 2015; DA, 2019a; DA, 2019b).

As previously mentioned, the U.S. Army addresses the concept of character in the Army ethic. This construct addresses several internal qualities that Army professionals must possess. Additionally, it introduces the three-pillar construct “character, presence, and intellect.” The Army ethic associates character with morality, urging its personnel always to take the right action. Finally, character is the cornerstone of “Trust” (DA, 2015b).

Furthermore, the Army discusses and incorporates character into the ALDM as depicted in Figure 2. This model points out several fundamental skills and qualities that Army leaders of all echelons must possess. Character is an internal quality of the leader, belongs to the leader’s attributes, and displays who the leader is (DA, 2015a; 2019a).

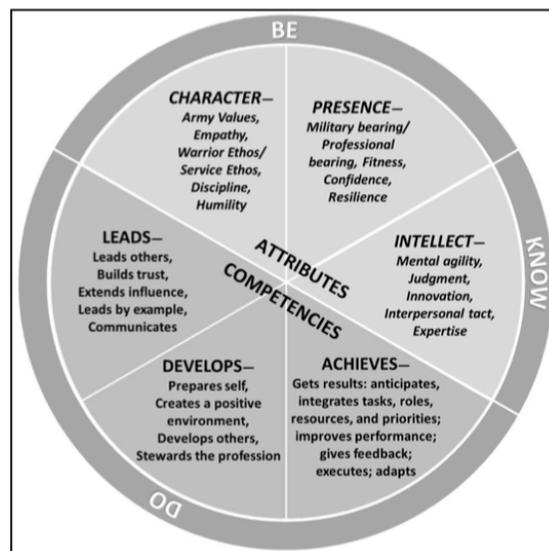


Figure 2. The Army Leadership Requirements Model (ALRM).  
Source: DA (2019a).

Within this context, the ADP and ADRP 6–22 (2019, 2012) extensively discuss the Army leader’s character as a subcategory of the three-pillar construct of “character, presence, and intellect” (p. 2-1, p. 31). They emphasize the importance of character, stating that one of a military leader’s obligations is to display “good character” and motivate

subordinates to do the same. ADP 6–22 (2019) defines character as “the moral and ethical qualities of the leader, which are revealed through their decisions and actions” (pp. 1–16, 2–1). The ADRP 6–22 (2012) adds to this definition that character “helps [the person] determine what is right and gives a leader motivation to do what is appropriate, regardless of the circumstances or consequences” (p. 3-1). Moreover, ADRP-1 (2015) provides two definitions of character. First, character is “one’s true nature including identity, sense of purpose, values, virtues, morals, and conscience” (p. 5-3). Second, it is the “dedication and adherence to the Army ethic, including Army values, as consistently and faithfully demonstrated in decisions and actions” (p. 3-2). Finally, Field Manual (FM) 6-22 (2015) considers character one of the key components which enable leaders and team members to perform in extreme conditions and complicated environments, and it defines character as “the essence of who an individual is, what individual values and believes, and how they behave” (p. 5-1).

Additionally, the U.S. Army associates character with the following core elements (DA, 2012b; 2019a), as shown in Figure 2:

1. **Army Values.** These are individuals’ internal beliefs that form their behavior (DA, 2012b). Each Army professional, whether military or civilian, must be infused by and adopt these moral principles, both in and out of Army life. These values are *loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage*. The definitions, in the form of urgings to the leaders, are shown in Appendix D.
2. **Empathy.** This is the Army leader’s ability to communicate emotionally with other people. Leaders should display empathy in a sincere way when they relate to other people’s situations, motives, or feelings.
3. **Warrior Ethos** (for the military) and **Service Ethos** (for civilians) have to do with the soldiers’ “selfless commitment to the Nation, mission, unit, and fellow Soldiers” (DA, 2019a, p. 2-8).
4. **Discipline.** This is the capacity to exert self-control and choose the more difficult course of action over a simpler one. Additionally, discipline refers



to the execution of tasks according to the Army's rules, without deviation. The U.S. Army considers discipline as the basis of character (DA, 2015a).

5. **Humility**, which is related to the leaders' demonstration of selflessness and working for a greater purpose. This element is not included in the core element structure of ADRP 6–22 (2012).

Pivoting to the military academy environment, West Point (2018), through its *Developing Leaders of Character (DLC)* manual, codifies the “West Point Leader Development System” (WPLDS) model, enabling all the members of the academy to have a common understanding of the desired character attributes and their development process. The ultimate goal for West Point is to provide the Army with officers who “Live honorably, Lead honorably, and Demonstrate Excellence” (West Point, 2018, p. 4). Thus, the DLC is a tool in that direction, and character is introduced to the “Live Honorably” category. The creation of a culture of character growth is one of the three WPLDS dimensions. The other two are individual development and leadership development.

All in all, the U.S. Army discusses the concept of character extensively in numerous documents. This, along with the fact that character has such a decisive role in West Point cadets' development, suggests that Army considers character as a crucial attribute of leaders. “Good character,” in the moral sense of the term, is a prerequisite for military leaders to lead by example and to function as role models to those under them.

## 2. Character Strengths

The U.S. Army does not restrict itself to the general discussion and definition of the concept of character. The Army ethic and ALDM identify specific character strengths which leaders and soldiers must possess to fulfill their duties. Moreover, West Point identifies character strengths for the cadets through the WPLDS.

The Army ethic addresses several internal qualities that Army professionals must possess. *Honor, morality, integrity, respect for others, courage for doing what is right, and judgment* fall under the character attribute; *seeking excellence, teamwork, discipline, courage in the face of death, and life-long learning* fall under the competence attribute; and



*wisdom* and *accountability* fall under the commitment attribute. All these qualities ensure the creation of “Trusted Army Professionals” (DA, 2015b).

The ADRP 6–22 (2012) and ADP 6–22 (2019), through analysis of the “character—competence—commitment” construct, add to the aforementioned internal qualities of leaders, *resilience*, and *judgment*. Additionally, ADP 6–22 (2019) states that good character is a prerequisite for a good military leader, but it does not stand alone. Instead, good character goes along with additional attributes, such as *accuracy* in the execution of several tasks, *physical fitness and health* (DA, 2018), and *persistence*. As far as humility is concerned, an individual’s *integrity*, *honesty*, and *character* significantly affect this core element. Moving on, the ADRP-1 (2012) discusses *courage* as well. Additionally, it mandates that since leadership takes place through example, the leader must demonstrate courage “by doing what is right despite risk, uncertainty, and fear” (p. 2-7). Moving on, Straus et al. (2018), through their research, ended up with the following Army-related traits: *ethical decision-making*, *initiative*, *conscientiousness*, *motivation to lead*, and *effective commitment*. Finally, Matthews (2020) also discusses the crucial role of trust in military leadership. He argues that this is based on the following critical character attributes of leaders: *integrity*, *determination*, and *courage*. Additionally, he identifies several character traits that may improve military personnel’s well-being in general, both inside and outside the military context. These are *hope*, *optimism*, *persistence*, *self-regulation*, *social intelligence*, and *leadership*. For the military cadets specifically, he considers *honesty*, *hope*, *bravery*, *persistence*, and *teamwork* as important character traits, no matter the country of origin. Finally, leaders should be models of appearance and professionalism, cultivate a moral climate, be determined and capable of timely completion of tasks, and display *persistence*, *patience*, and *sound judgment*. (DA, 2012b).

Regarding operational deployments, where soldiers may be in combat situations and experience several adversities, Chopik et al. (2021) discuss the positive impact of *resilience*. The authors studied U.S. Army soldiers in the deployment cycle, proving that those who had resilience as an aspect of their character before the deployment manifested character stability both during and after the deployment.



Regarding the Army's service academy, the WPLDS determines five attributes of character that are fundamental for cadets (West Point, 2018):

1. *Moral*, which incorporates Army ethics and expects cadets to manifest *integrity* and *awareness of ethicality* in all situations.
2. *Civic*, which embodies *empathy*, *respect*, and *humility*, so cadets must behave accordingly.
3. *Performance*, which relates to goal fulfillment and *resilience*.
4. *Social*, which calls for cadets to act and behave with *honor* in all aspects of their life, and
5. *Leadership*, which is the individual's ability to inspire others.

Overall, the Army provides a plethora of character strengths that leaders should possess. However, *integrity*, *honesty*, *courage*—both in everyday life and in the face of death—along with *persistence* and *judgment*, are mentioned repeatedly. *Resilience*, specifically, is frequently discussed, and the Army considers it crucial for the leaders to fulfill their duties in the real operational situations in deployments.

### **3. The Importance of Character**

The U.S. Army considers that character has a foundational role in a range of leadership domains. First, character is crucial as it shapes military leader's identity. According to this identity, leaders are assigned to their role by the military organization, they are aware of their role, they are related to others, and their followers perceive them accordingly. This kind of self-awareness is fundamental. If they are unaware of their identity, leaders will be unable to execute their assigned duties and inspire their subordinates. Additionally, the Army considers character significant for leaders to face the stress that comes from complex and rapidly changing situations that military leaders typically face (DA, 2019a). Thus, character is a key attribute (along with presence and intellect) for a successful Army leader because it reflects his or her embodiment of Army values and ethics. Most importantly, leaders' character is the foundation of trust and accountability (DA, 2018) between them and their followers. After all, the character



determines whether the latter accept and try to emulate their leaders (DA, 2015a). The U.S. Army College (2013) also points out the attribution of character to the cultivation of trust in the chain of command, adding the subsequent benefit to the execution of the mission. “Trusted Army professionals of character,” along with competence and commitment, demonstrate high performance, take reasonable risks, support teamwork, and cultivate trust (DA, 2017b).

But the Army does not focus solely on individual—and team—level character. The creation of leaders of character is among the factors that contribute to creating a successful organizational climate as well. For instance, the *fairness* character attribute, which is displayed by giving equal opportunities or through objective assessments, creates a culture of equity and health. A successful military environment, per se, is characterized by a focus on Army values and warrior ethos, a clearly determined purpose, cohesion, a learning approach, and, most importantly, trust. The culture of trust creates a productive and innovative work culture. Conversely, the lack of trust may result in a counterproductive and unhealthy work environment. The Army highlights that once trust is broken, it is difficult to rebuild (DA, 2012b).

In sum, the Army discusses the impact of character. First, leaders with strong character can fulfill their duties more effectively. Furthermore, character is strongly correlated with an Army’s professional identity, which has a foundational notion in the U.S. Army, as it defines the leader’s position within the Army structure and his or her interaction with others. Moreover, character plays an important role in the cultivation of accountability of leaders to their followers and the subsequent cultivation of trust in the military environment. This is significant because trust is an indispensable part of the military profession. Finally, character helps leaders to build team spirit, which is also important in a military environment.

#### **4. The Development of Character**

Initially, the U.S. Army points out the challenging aspect of character development within the military context. The ADRP 6–22 (2012) and ADP 6–22 (2019) recognize that to become a leader of character, impeccable personal skills are required. The reason for



this is that leaders not only adapt their own or a subordinate's character to military values but also may need to strive to change deeply held beliefs, which is something that makes the military profession distinctive (DA, 2019a). The extra challenge for military leaders is that they are responsible for developing themselves and their subordinates in terms of character, presence, and intellect.

There are several methods supporting this process. First is for leaders to provide and obtain counseling, coaching, and mentoring. In the counseling process, leaders are required to direct their subordinates to improve their performance. In coaching, they help their subordinates acquire specific skills and capabilities. Mentoring is a voluntary relationship based on trust that is developed between leaders and subordinates, where leaders enlighten the latter with their experience on issues of any kind (DA, 2019a). FM 6-22 (2015) adds that leaders develop their subordinates through role modeling, transferring clear expectations, and demanding compliance with the Army ethic and values (DA, 2015a). Moving on, the ADRP-1 (2015) states that it is the Army's obligation to develop the character of its personnel through education, training, and inspiration so that they fully embrace the Army ethic. FM 6-22 (2015) highlights the importance of experiences as a way of leaders' character development, a position which ADRP 6-22 (2012) and ADP 6-22 (2019) also embrace. "Leaders are a product of their experiences" (DA, 2019a, p. 6-22). If leaders adopt the Army values and the warrior ethos, they can display "good character" and subsequently be a positive example for their subordinates. ADRP 6-22 (2012) states that the character of individuals' is formed by their "day-to-day experience, education, self-development, developmental counseling, coaching, and mentoring" (p. 3-5). Moreover, methods such as role modeling, the establishment of ethical expectations (DA, 2015a), as well as reflection, feedback, study (including virtual self-assessment tools), and practice are key tools for character development (DA, 2018). Finally, organizational culture plays a crucial role in character development as well. Should military organizations establish and cultivate a moral culture, "people will think, feel, and act ethically" (DA, 2012b, p. 3-5).

In the context of deployment, Chopik et al. (2021) contend that resilience is a crucial character strength for deployments. Additionally, for soldiers to face adversities



successfully during deployments, they must shape these adversities in advance, talk about them, and engage in self-reflection. However, the results of Chopik et al.'s study (2021) are mixed. On the one side, resilience remained stable after painful and stressful experiences of deployments for those who already had this character strength. On the other hand, a smaller but significant percentage of soldiers (40%) experienced a decline in character strengths after deployment experiences. So, the main conclusion is that the adversities of deployments and the potential life-threatening events do not always contribute positively to character development.

The significance and the complexity of the character development process are also addressed in the Army academy literature. For example, West Point (2018) provides a schematic model of character growth, as depicted in Figure 3. The new knowledge and capabilities come from experiences where cadets face potential challenges. Instructors must support and assess them in that effort. After those experiences, the cadets should reflect, extract, and evaluate important lessons. This is a time-consuming procedure but will help cadets cultivate their self-awareness.

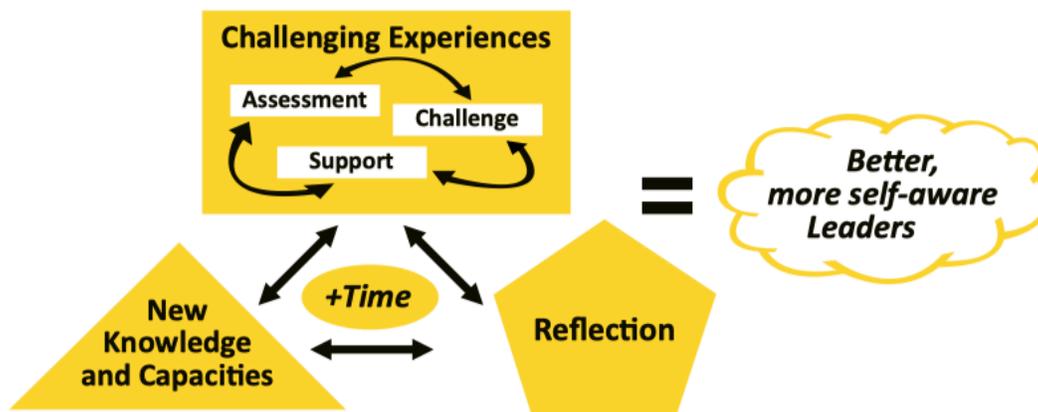


Figure 3. Character Growth Model for Leaders. Source: West Point (2018).

Carrying the West Point context forward, Dufresne and Offstein (2012) point out the significance of the honor code. First, the authors conclude that West Point's honor code is not a stand-alone document, but rather it has been integrated into all curricular and extracurricular academy activities and has thus become an integral part of cadets' lives,

diffusing its principles across contexts. Additionally, in that process, ethical discussions inside the academy are important, permeating all academic disciplines and, more broadly, all aspects of a student’s academic life. Finally, the authors claim that the everyday experiences inside the academy, along with the corresponding challenges, temptations, and military training, give the cadets a chance to test and improve both the courage and integrity of their character.

Finally, ADP 6–22 (2019) discusses the significance of physical character training in the character development process. Physical courage goes along with moral courage, so the importance of physical training for all military personnel is crucial. Physical fitness helps soldiers perform better, be more confident, reduce stress, and recover from potential adversities. For leaders especially, it enables them to perform in any environment while maintaining their mental clarity and emotional stability, both of which are crucial for effective decision making. The doctrine regards the physical fitness component as a demonstration of ideal character.

Taken together, the U.S. Army discusses character development in pieces through several publications and, for the most part, as part of leader development, stating that character development is a complicated and continuous process. In turn, leadership development is adjusted to the “character—competence—commitment” construct. Military leaders have the dual responsibility to work both for their own character improvement as well as for that of their subordinates. Experience plays a primary role in this process, whereas counseling, coaching, and mentoring have a crucial role in the character development of others. Additionally, organizational culture and climate, as well as foundational organizational documents, shape people’s character.

## **5. The Assessment of Character**

The U.S. Army highlights the importance of the character assessment again through the assessment of leaders’ “character—competence—commitment.” According to the Army, assessment tools identify strengths and weaknesses and are foundational for the establishment of a comprehensive development strategy (DA, 2015a). This assessment process involves the records of the individual’s performance, the determination of whether



that performance meets Army standards, and finally, the discussion of the results with the subordinate being assessed (DA, 2019a).

Additionally, both FM 6-22 (2015) and LDIG (2018) provide Army leaders with a specific assessment strategy for their overall development, character development included. Initially, these documents give an overview of each ALDM element. Then, they identify strengths and indicators of weakness along with potential underlying causes for an identified weakness. Finally, the doctrine suggests ways leaders can improve in this specific element through feedback, study, and practice. LDIG (2018) incorporates this effort into an Individual Leadership Development Plan (ILDLP) and the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) tools. The ILDP documents the leader's self-assessment and constitutes the beginning of his or her improvement effort. The MSAF extends this assessment beyond the individual level, establishing feedback to leaders from all directions, superiors, peers, and subordinates (DA, 2018).

The U.S. Army formerly used the Global Assessment Tool (GAT) as a character measurement tool. One of the 16 GAT scales was a short version of the VIA-IS, measuring character strengths (DA, 2017a). Now, the Army Resilience Directorate has updated and renamed GAT as the "Azimuth Check" (Army Resilience Directorate, n.d.). FM 7-22 (2012) provides the Army process to improve and assess soldiers' physical fitness. Physical fitness is significant as, among others, it increases resilience and decreases stress during challenging situations (DA, 2012a).

The Army officers' evaluation report support form (DA Form 67-10-1A), in Part IV, assesses leaders' competencies related to their displayed attributes as leaders of character. More specifically, in subpart C1, the officers are evaluated for their adherence to the U.S. Army-defined principles, values, empathy, warrior ethos, service ethos, and discipline (DA, 2019b).

West Point assesses the cadets' character development within the overall WPLDS model by using the periodic development review (PDR). This is a rating tool (Unsatisfactory development; Developing below pace; Developing at pace; Developing



ahead of pace; Exceptional) which aims at the cadets' assessment and development through reflection, counseling, and constructive dialogue (West Point, 2018).

In sum, even though it employs contemporary tools such as the “Azimuth Check” (formerly the GAT), the U.S. Army approaches character assessment as an individual obligation. Leaders should evaluate themselves and then follow the proposed ways to improve their character. In terms of evaluation by their superiors, leaders, as well as Army cadets' character assessment, several elements have been incorporated as part of the overall assessment.

Based on several foundational documents, the U.S. Army clearly places a premium on character as it is prominent throughout the Army's professional ethic and ALDM construct. According to the provided definitions, morality is a foundational aspect of character. Additionally, the Army states that character has a significant positive impact on all levels, the individual, “on others” (DA 2012a, p.11-7) and the organizational level (DA 2019a). In particular, the Army distinguishes the character strengths of integrity, honesty, courage, persistence, and judgment, whereas resilience makes the difference in coping with the challenges in deployments. Moreover, the Army doctrine discusses character development and assessment as part of the leader development process, but to a lesser extent. Although leaders must deal with both their own and their subordinates' character development, the organizational role is also crucial in that process. Finally, in terms of character assessment, even though the Army provides its leaders with several tools, the responsibility for character assessment seems to rest more heavily on the individual than on the Army organization. In other words, the U.S. Army seems to emphasize character self-assessment rather than the organizational assessment process.

### **C. CHARACTER IN HELLENIC ARMY LITERATURE**

The Hellenic Army (HA) does not emphasize the concept of character to the same extent as the U.S. Army. Additionally, although HA doctrine provides us with several character strengths, the HA has not incorporated them into a basic developmental framework. Finally, the HA approaches the assessment and the development of character through the leader development process.



## 1. The Concept of Character and Its Importance

To begin with ancient philosophy, Aristotle counts the concept of “Virtue” as part of the individual’s character. Virtue is a habit (*exis*) chosen freely by individuals and is tightly related to individuals’ ethics. It drives them to well-being and flourishing (*eudaimonia*). Virtue is the middle ground between two extremes—deficiencies and excesses. Aristotle calls this situation the “golden mean” (*mesotita*) (Moskovitis, 1993). Furthermore, there are the Delphic orders, which are written around the gate and on the columns of the sacred temple of Apollo in the Oracle of Delphi. These are a collection of 147 simple and essential quotations of a few words that summarize moral principles and spiritual laws of wisdom. Most of them are dedicated to the Seven Sages of Antiquity. Out of 147 orders, the two most prominent that relate to people’s inner qualities, and which were written in a distinct place in the temple, were “Γνῶθι σεαυτόν” [Know yourself] and “Μηδέν ἄγαν” [Do nothing is excess] (Kaktos Publications, 2022).

Moving to the contemporary era, Mpampiniotis (2019) defines “character” (*charaktiras*) as “the set of properties and features that shape and make up the integrity of a person, which define and at the same time express themselves in the individual’s unique way of behaving, thinking, and reacting.” The HA defines character as “a moral conscience that is in accordance with Military Values, and that enables the military leader to make the right decisions when confronted with difficult situations” (HAGS, 2013, p.51). Character is meaningless if it is not manifested through a moral prism. It is tightly connected with morality; both create a quality advantage in military individuals to such an extent that in war, this may make the difference between victory and defeat (HAGS, 2013).

Nonetheless, the concept of character is not always clear in the HA publications. Several times the HA uses “character” and “personality” interchangeably. For instance, it argues that leaders’ military values, characteristic attributes, and actions form their personality. In another place, it examines character as an aspect of a leader’s personality. Moreover, the HA implies that character is part of the “Be” part of the “Be–Know–Do” leaders construct but does not include the term “character” explicitly. Instead, it uses the term “characteristic attributes” (HAGS, 2013).



The HA frequently highlights the importance of character. Initially, it considers the military leader's character significant because it contributes to military members' competence as individuals and leaders. Additionally, character is an aspect of military leaders that enables them to perceive reality and their mission, make the corresponding decisions, and inspire their followers to follow them in this mission. Moreover, character is a factor that plays a critical role in the communication between the leader and his or her subordinates. That is why the HA suggests that military leaders should improve their own and their subordinates' character (HAGS, 1989). HAGS (2013) asserts that character is the foundation of what leaders know and what they do. Military leaders lead by example, and character plays a significant role in that process. It helps a leader to determine what is right, act properly, and inspire others to perform accordingly. Finally, the leader's character is important because it is manifested inside and outside the military environment.

The HA's service regulation, HAGS (2021), dictates initially that an Army member's highest duty is to defend the nation. As far as character is concerned, the HAGS (2021) states that military personnel should embody the following military values:

1. **Patriotism (*filopatria*)**. *Patrida* is similar in meaning to the English word "country." But it is not the same, and there is another word in Greek for the word "country." *Patrida* is a word with a stronger impact. Mpampiniotis (2019) defines *patrida* as "the country or place of birth, which connects the individuals—members of a nation—with their homeland and common heritage, as well as the individuals among them" (p. 1358). So, patriotism is considered pure and without selfish love (Ploumis, 2021).
2. **Patience (*karteria*)**. Again, there is no exact translation in English for the word "karteria." There is another word in Greek for the word "patience." We can describe it as the absolute degree of patience and endurance.
3. **Prowess (*andreia*)**, which is the manifestation of the combination of valor, dignity, and modesty against any threat (HAGS, 2021).



4. **Military spirit (*stratiotiko pnevma*).** This makes it possible for all Army members, no matter where they are in the chain of command, to share the same values and principles in how they do their job (Ploumis, 2021).
5. **Discipline (*pitharchia*).** This demands the submission of personal will to military orders and regulations. That is, there is another will that exists above the individual will, and it determines how military personnel conduct themselves (HAGS, 2021).

Moving to the civilian literature that is taught in the Hellenic Army Academy (HAA), Mpourantas (2017) disagrees that leadership is a matter of mere character, supporting the idea that it is a matter of “character of behavior.” In other words, the leaders’ behavior displays their character; the character of leadership’s behavior is foundational and contributes significantly to the leader’s behavioral effectiveness. Additionally, the author argues that the foundational pillar of leadership is the cultivation of “trust” between the leader and the follower. Sequentially, the foundational pillars of this “trust” are the character traits of integrity, knowledge, benevolence, and competence. Ploumis (2021) also discusses the importance of “trust” within the military environment. He supports that trust is cultivated through the leader’s manifestation of *humbleness* or *modesty*, *adaptability*, *responsibility*, and *justice* in relation to his or her subordinates. Additionally, the author claims that military leaders’ inner qualities reflect “Military Ethos,” which consists of the Hellenic nation’s foundational principles and virtues, military principles, and war ethics, as these have existed through the centuries. However, the author does not emphasize the concept of character specifically.

We see in this section that there is literature, even from antiquity, discussing the concept of character. The HA defines character, highlights its importance, and correlates character with specific military values. However, we observe that the HA addresses character and competence as if they have a relationship of cause and effect. Additionally, even though the HA highlights the importance of leaders’ character at the individual level and in relating to their subordinates, it omits the importance of character to the military organization. The HA also discusses the concept of character interchangeably with personality without determining the difference between these terms. Often the HA implies



the notion of character or uses terms such as “characteristic attributes” to replace it. Furthermore, in the manual taught in the HAA, leaders’ character is combined with the notion of behavior as an indivisible whole. Finally, we observe that the use of the concept of character in Hellenic leadership literature is generally limited.

## 2. Character Strengths

In general, the HA believes that despite technological progress, the “human” factor continues to play a critical role in multiplying combat power on the battlefield. “Strong character” will always be one of the most prominent traits of leaders, as it has been historically. In particular, *integrity*, *bravery*, and *loyalty* are military leader traits that will remain unchanged (HAGS, 1999).

HAGS considers as the most significant military leadership principle that: “The leader must know themselves and seek their self-improvement” (HAGS, 1988, p. 5). Additionally, it identifies the fundamental character traits of military leaders which are: *courage*, *determination*, *knowledge*, *initiative*, *integrity*, *selflessness*, *justice*, *reliability*, *resilience*, *loyalty to the Nation and the mission*, *decency*, *humility*, *enthusiasm*, *good behavior*, *righteous judgment*, and *humor* (HAGS, 1988). Those traits are analyzed in Appendix E.

Moreover, the HA identifies other traits that associate implicitly with character. First, HA considers *discipline* as a foundational trait for the military function. But there is not only that. The following traits fall under the “Be” part of the “Be-Know-Do” leaders construct: *Will* for fulfilling the mission, *self-regulation*, *initiative*, *judgment*, *self-confidence*, *intelligence*, and *spiritual cultivation*. Under the “Do” part fall *emotional balance* and *stability*. Finally, HA determines that *self-awareness*, *reliability*, *emotional understanding*, *support*, and *respect* are the prerequisites for leaders to approach their subordinates and help them to improve (HAGS, 2013). Finally, during war, HA supports the idea that fighters must display *valor* and *patience*, along with *persistence* and *self-sacrifice*, to accomplish their primary mission, which is to defeat the enemy in any possible way (HAGS, 2021).



Beyond the HA publications, the HAA addresses specific character strengths that it expects cadets to possess. Initially, the institution highlights the nature and uniqueness of the military profession. The future officers will be leaders, which means that their actions will affect human souls, not just equipment. For that reason, the cadets' incorporation of the later-mentioned virtues is crucial. HAA states that its ultimate goal is "to deliver to the army officers loyal to the country and honorable; nourished with the virtues of prowess, discipline, and patience; able to inspire through their character, teach by their example, and command with prudence" (Stratitotiki Scholi Evelpidon, 2021, p. 10). Ethos and honor are foundational for the cadets. Those terms include morality, integrity, and quality of character as foundational aspects of the cadet's character. Other equally important character aspects are:

1. *Valor*, which is a synonym for fortitude and means conscious strength against dangers.
2. *Winner's spirit*, which is the will for someone to prevail and succeed.
3. *Duty*, which is the cadets' obligation to uphold the established values and focus on the team and the nation's mission accomplishment.
4. *Justice*, which includes treating everybody equitably.
5. Psychological and physical *fitness*, which helps them keep their moral and mental clarity under stress and tiredness.

Returning to the civilian literature, Mpourantas (2017) contends that the leader is defined by the traits of *humility, integrity, ethics, wisdom, responsibility, generosity, consent, mindfulness, daring, and courage*. He contrasts these characteristics with those associated with rulers, such as arrogance, cunning, aggressiveness, boldness, and relentlessness—the dark side of a leader who believes that the "end justifies the means." Ploumis (2021), on the other side, supports that the military leader must serve based on this by displaying *integrity, justice, discipline, empathy, faith* in the mission, and *respect*. Additionally, the author addresses the importance of *wisdom*. He supports that competence enables leaders to know their duties or tasks and how to execute them. Wisdom, on the other hand, is the leaders' ability to distinguish where and when they must implement this



competence. Finally, he gives prominent importance to the character trait of *justice*, arguing that even if military leaders are strict with their subordinates, justice must always prevail; this kind of justice is based on Aristotle’s quote, “There is nothing more unfair than the equivalent of the uneven” (Ploumis, 2021, p. 275.)

Overall, we observe that *integrity, courage, justice, wisdom, and humility* are repeatedly mentioned and meaningful character strengths of military leaders for the HA. *Wisdom* is as well, and the term is used interchangeably with *judgment*. Additionally, the HA gives particular importance to the character traits that affect the subordinates of military leaders, such as *empathy* and *respect*. Finally, in the case of war, the HA considers valor, patience, persistence, and self-sacrifice indispensable aspects of the character of leaders and any soldier for the accomplishment of the mission.

### **3. The Development of Character**

According to Aristotle, people’s dispositions—inherited from nature—give them their abilities. They act based on those dispositions. However, that is not the case with virtue (*Areti*). Here, people first act out virtuous actions and then acquire virtuous traits through these actions. Righteous people, for example, become so by acting justly, and courageous people by acting courageously (Moskovitis, 1993).

The HA considers that military virtues shape a leader’s character. Additionally, personal and professional experience, perceptions, and knowledge contribute to the development of the military leader’s character. In any case, the HA considers it a complicated process and states that military leaders are responsible both for their and their subordinates’ character development (HAGS, 2013).

Ploumis (2021) focuses on the topic of leader development, indirectly addressing the character concept. He considers military leaders’ development as an ongoing process, associating it with the development of their competencies. Further, he argues that leaders are developed through education, knowledge, experiences, and self-reflection. Education provides them with competencies and behavioral rules. Experiences, especially challenging ones, force leaders to use their knowledge and work outside of their comfort zones under stress. That way, they develop new competencies. Finally, self-reflection helps



leaders exercise a critical eye on their actions and behaviors, enhancing their self-awareness. Ploumis (2021) also shows how important mentoring is to the growth of leaders by telling the story of the Mentor from the *Odyssey*, who was the personification of the goddess of wisdom, Athena, and guided Odysseus's son during Odysseus's absence in the Trojan War. Finally, Mpourantas (2017) discusses personality trait development, claiming that this process occurs in most people through their daily actions. Indicatively, he quotes Aristotle, "We are what we repeatedly do" (Mpourantas, 2017, p. 85).

We can conclude that the HA approaches the concept of character development very superficially and through the spectrum of overall character development of leaders. A common conclusion that can be drawn is that character is developed through experiences and actions. These two factors substantially affect individuals' character. Finally, we observe the implicit identicality of the terms "personality" and "character" again.

#### **4. The Assessment of Character**

The HA evaluates both officers and noncommissioned officers (NCO) annually. The manifestation of certain character traits is part of the evaluation and encompasses *courage against physical threats, standing of their ground, honesty, dignity, accountability, responsibility, trustworthiness, discipline, and justice*. Officers are evaluated on a scale of 0 to 100, with written observations from their superiors (HAGS, 2001a). For the NCOs, the scale is from 0 to 10, and they are evaluated in more general terms, such as their psychological competencies or their moral standing (HAGS 2001b).

The HAA takes a somewhat different approach to measuring character and has determined that each cadet will be judged by a committee at the end of the school year. Among other things, this committee assesses the cadets' character as they displayed it throughout the year. Specifically, valor, integrity, honesty, initiative, accountability, and justice are assessed according to a scale of 0 to 100 (Hellenic Army Academy [HAA], 2018).

In general, we can see that the idea of character is not new and has been talked about for thousands of years. The HA considers character significant for military leaders and discusses it, but not in depth; at some point, it does so implicitly. Additionally, the HA



publications and those that are used in the HAA do not make clear the distinction between “character,” “personality,” and “behavior.” As far as character strengths are concerned, the traits of integrity, courage, justice, wisdom, and humility are significant for the Hellenic military leaders’ character. Wisdom or judgment should also be there to direct leaders to use their competencies appropriately. Additionally, they must always be imbued with traits such as empathy and respect in relating to their subordinates. Furthermore, in the case of war, the character strengths of valor, patience, persistence, and self-sacrifice will help leaders to prevail against any opponent. Moving to character development, the HA highlights the impact of individuals’ actions and their experiences on this process, whereas, in general, the HA provides us with very few details on this domain. Finally, the only way that the HA assesses the character of its leaders is implicitly through the annual evaluations of the officers, NCOs, and military academy cadets.

#### **D. SUMMARY**

The primary purpose of this chapter was to point out what character strengths contribute to the emergence of a military leader. We first saw different approaches in addressing the concept of character. Academics in the fields of psychology and management delve into it in detail. The U.S. Army addresses the concept of character adequately through the Army ethic and Army Leadership Development Model. The Hellenic Army also discusses character, but not to an appropriate extent.

Regarding character strengths, the literature examines them, frequently according to two basic constructs—the Peterson and Seligman classification method (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and the character dimensions and associated elements construct (Crossan et al., 2017). The U.S. Army considers character strengths *integrity, honesty, courage*—both in everyday life and in the face of death—foundational for its leaders. Additionally, it frequently discusses the strengths of *persistence, judgment, and resilience*. Similarly, the HA points to the character strengths of *integrity, courage, justice, wisdom, humility, and judgment*. Additionally, it repeatedly discusses the strengths of *empathy and respect* strengths with respect to the relationship between leaders and their subordinates.



The literature studied highlights the importance of character and its positive multi-dimensional impact—on the individual, team, and organizational levels. The U.S. Army also addresses character’s importance at the individual level but emphasizes its positive contribution to the leader–led relationship. At the organizational level, the U.S. Army addresses character’s contribution to cultivating trust in the U.S. military environment. The HA follows the same pattern, but it does not highlight the contribution of character to the military organization.

In the domains of character development and assessment, the literature provides several tools, highlighting everyday experiences, especially the crucibles, and organizational culture as basic contributors to that process. Additionally, scholars focus on tools within the educational environment. In terms of character assessment, the literature provides several tools as well, but the most prominent is the VIA-IS character assessment tool (Peterson & Seligman, n.d.). The U.S. Army discusses character development and assessment as part of the leader development process, but not in detail. Regarding character assessment, the U.S. Army employs several tools, but these seem to focus mostly on a self-oriented approach to character assessment. The HA touches on character development superficially. Additionally, it approaches character assessment only through the basic annual assessments for officers and NCOs.

In the next chapter, a more thorough analysis of the U.S. and Hellenic armies is provided as a benchmark against what exists in the literature in terms of the established research questions. In particular, the chapter compares the existing definitions of character and some basic terms such as personality, values, and virtues. The chapter follows the same process in terms of character strengths, the importance of character as well as character development and assessment. Specifically, in addition to the prominent character strengths, the discussion will compare those strengths holistically and in detail for both armies. Similarly, the chapter examines the respective character development and assessment processes that the two armies use.



### **III. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this chapter, we combine our two qualitative methods—content analysis and case studies comparison. Through content analysis, we analyze what the U.S. and the Hellenic armies’ publications emphasize in terms of the primary research questions of this thesis. By using a comparison of the case studies, we look at the two armies in terms of the research questions, and we compare each army against what exists in the academic literature on the concept of character. This comparison adds more perspective to our evaluation of the two armies and subsequently enables us to draw accurate conclusions.

Overall, by combining these two methods, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the similarities and differences in the ways that a military leader’s character is conceptualized and practiced in different contexts. The U.S. Army is closer to the business and psychology literature in these areas. The HA is quite behind, especially in the character development domain. However, there is room for improvement for both armies. For that reason, at the end of this chapter, some recommendations are for each military.

#### **A. THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER**

The U.S. and the Hellenic armies approach the concept of character of the leader differently. The U.S. Army discusses it quite extensively, mostly through the Army ethic and ALDM construct. On the other hand, while the HA also discusses the concept of character, it does so to a lesser extent. In the business world, by contrast, the discussion of the leader’s character is extensive. The corporate scandals of the 2000s and subsequent lack of trust in leadership, whether in private businesses or public administrations, sparked the discussion on the importance of a leader’s character again (Crossan et al., 2013).

Getting into the details, the term “leaders of character” creates some controversy between the U.S. Army and the academic literature. Specifically, the U.S. Army emphasizes the significance of character within the military context by adopting the terms



“leaders of character,” “people of character,” or “professionals of character,” both in general Army and in West Point publications. These terms refer to leaders who are inspired by Army values and who perform ethically. The U.S. perspective is reflected in the “values-based” leadership described in the academic literature, which focuses on the individual and on characteristics that emphasize the significance of individual growth. However, according to the literature, “character-based leadership” goes beyond the individual level. Leadership which is based on character seeks improvement at both the individual and the social levels (Wright & Lauer, 2013). That is a significant perspective that both armies should take into consideration. On the other hand, the HA does not use similar terms, only indirectly connecting character with the military leader.

Table 2 enables us to examine how the academic literature and the two armies address the concept of character, starting from the character definitions:

Examining the definitions in Table 2, we can make some observations. First, the two armies agree that character is an internal quality of a leader. Additionally, they both correlate character with morality. This perspective aligns with the existing academic literature that sees character through a moral lens and considers it as an individual’s predisposed inner quality. Moreover, the two armies go a step further, connecting the leaders’ character with their “right” or “appropriate” actions and decisions. The connection of the terms “right” and “appropriate” with specific actions or decisions seems quite abstract. Terms like these pose the danger of personal interpretation by the reader. It would be better if definitions of “character” did not include potentially subjective terms that are open to individual interpretation.



Table 2. Definitions of Character (from various sources).

<b>Psychology and Business</b>
“the sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race, viewed as a homogenous whole; the individuality impressed by nature and habit on man or nation; a mental or moral constitution” (The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989, p. 31)
“those interpretable and habitual qualities within individuals, and applicable to organizations that both constrain and lead them to desire and pursue personal and societal good” (Wright & Quick, 2011, p. 976)
“particular mental and moral attitudes that leave one feeling most deeply and intensely vibrant and alive” (Wright & Lauer, 2013, p. 26)
“Inherent moral beliefs, intentions, and predispositions” (Sosik & Cameron, 2010, p. 251)
“the character of a leader [that] involves his or her ethical and moral beliefs, intentions and behaviors” (Bass & Bass, 2009, p. 219)
“purposeful and principled moral self that reflects the values, principles, ideals of—and duties and obligations to—the collective to which the leader belongs” (Hannah & Jennings, 2013, p. 9)
<b>U.S. Army</b>
“the moral and ethical qualities of the leader, which are revealed through their decisions and actions” (DA, 2019a, pp. 1–16, 2–1). The DA (2012a) adds that character “helps (a person) determine what is right and gives a leader motivation to do what is appropriate, regardless of the circumstances or consequences” (p. 3-1)
“one’s true nature including identity, sense of purpose, values, virtues, morals, and conscience” (DA, 2015b, p. 5-3)
“dedication and adherence to the Army Ethic, including Army Values, as consistently and faithfully demonstrated in decisions and actions” (DA, 2015b, p. 3-2)
<b>Hellenic Army</b>
“a moral conscience that is in accordance with Military Values, and that enables the military leader to make the right decisions when confronted with difficult situations” (HAGS, 2013, p. 51)



Additionally, when the HA discusses character in its publications, it tends to conflate certain distinct terms. For example, it uses the term “personality” interchangeably with the term “character.” In the academic literature, the terms “character,” “virtues,” “values,” and “personality” are close, but they are not the same (Crossan et al., 2010). Character is motivated by specific values and leads individuals to a desired objective (Crossan et al., 2013). Personality, on the other hand, is an inner quality as well, but it has to do with how individuals expose their inner world to others (Bass & Bass, 2009). Wright and Lauer (2013) refer to personality “as individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behavior.” Moreover, personality is relatively fixed in an individual, in contrast to character, which can be developed throughout the individual’s life (Crossan et al., 2013). As a result, we see that character may look close to personality, but these two terms have differences, and it would be better if they were not used interchangeably.

Against this backdrop, Table 3 enables us to see how the two armies approach values, which are the motivational powers of character.

Table 3. The U.S. and Hellenic Armies’ Respective Values.

<b>U.S. Army Values (DA, 2019a)</b>	<b>Hellenic Army Values (HAGS, 2021)</b>
Loyalty	Patriotism ( <i>Filopatria</i> )
Duty	Patience ( <i>karteria</i> )
Respect	Military Spirit ( <i>Stratitotiko pnevma</i> )
Selfless Service	Discipline ( <i>pitharchia</i> )
Honor	Prowess ( <i>Andreia</i> )
Integrity	-
Personal Courage	-

Adapted from DA (2019a), HAGS (2013).



We see different perspectives in terms of values. The U.S. Army has incorporated a combination of more abstract and general terms, such as *loyalty*, *duty*, and *honor*, with more specific individual manifestations, such as *selflessness* and *respect*. Additionally, the U.S. Army has incorporated into its values qualities that the academic literature considers character strengths, such as *integrity*, *respect*, and *courage* (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Crossan et al., 2017). Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, character is a concept distinct from both values and personality (Wright & Lauer, 2013). Furthermore, we observe that the U.S. Army, through the *duty* value, urges the military leader to “always do your best.” Every person, however, may have different perspectives on what is best. So, this general direction does not help the leader or soldiers perceive where the bar is or how the Army expects them to fulfill their duties. The HA, on the other hand, uses similarly the more general terms of *patriotism* and *military spirit*, along with the specific elements of *discipline* and *patience*. Additionally, it also incorporates as a value the character strength of *prowess*, which is similar to courage. As a result, we can conclude that for both armies, the differentiation between values and character is not clear. The HA adds to this equation the trait of personality, making the situation even more vague.

Neither army considers character a stand-alone concept. The U.S. Army, through the ALDM, presents “character” as a core attribute of the leader, along with “presence” and “intellect.” The three concepts, together, present who the leader is and what he or she knows. However, these are only half of the qualities of successful leaders. Leaders must also possess the competencies of leadership by developing themselves, their subordinates, and the organization and achieving the corresponding results (DA, 2019a). The HA also adopts the three-pillar “be-know-do” view for complete and successful leaders, but instead of the term “character” under the “be” part, it uses the term “characteristic attributes.” In other words, it implies character but does not explicitly refer to it (HAGS, 2013). Both armies are close to the academic literature’s “character, competence, and commitment” construct, which functions as an indivisible whole for successful leaders. In other words, even if character occupies a prominent position in this schema, leaders must also have deep



knowledge and specific skills. Additionally, they must be committed to the assigned mission (Crossan et al., 2010). Especially important is the strong bond between character and competence, as their combination may raise the performance of a leader steeply (Sturm et al., 2017). Consequently, the U.S. Army has adopted a complete and informative construct of the military leader where character, position, and role are clear. The HA has adopted the same idea but has not established a similarly comprehensive construct.

## **B. CHARACTER STRENGTHS**

Even though the two armies repeat several times that leaders should lead by example and that the demonstration of good character is fundamental to that process, neither of them uses the term “character strengths.” However, as we examine later, they both provide us with several qualities that military leaders should possess.

We use two basic constructs of the academic literature to compare the two armies in terms of character strengths. First is the thorough analysis of Peterson and Seligman (2004), who present character strengths within the virtues frame, as shown in Appendix A. Second, we use the character dimensions construct (Crossan et al., 2017) that appears frequently in the academic literature, as shown in Figure 1 and analyzed in Appendix B.

The following two tables depict the character strengths that the U.S. and Hellenic armies consider their leaders should possess. Specifically, Table 4 depicts the character strengths that the two armies have in common, whereas Table 5 shows the character strengths that they diverge. We refer to the term “character strengths” in the broad sense, including both character strengths and dimensions as presented in the academic literature (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Crossan et al., 2017).



Table 4. Character Strengths Common in the U.S. and Hellenic Armies.

Character Strengths	Academic Literature Classification	
	(Peterson & Seligman, 2004)	(Crossan et al., 2017)
<i>Integrity</i>	Character Strength	Character Dimension
<i>Courage</i> (HA uses the term <i>proweess</i> too)	Virtue	Character Dimension
<i>Respect</i>	-	Character Element
<i>Empathy</i> (HA uses the term <i>emotional understanding</i> )	-	Character Element
<i>Honesty</i>	Character Strength	-
<i>Humility</i>	Character Strength	Character Dimension
<i>Resilience</i>	-	Character Element -
<i>Judgment</i> (HA uses the term <i>righteous judgment</i> )	Character Strength	Character Dimension
<i>Fairness</i> (HA uses the term <i>justice</i> )	Character Strength/Virtue	Character Dimension
<i>Self-regulation</i>	Character Strength	-
<i>Knowledge</i>	Virtue	-
<i>Patience</i>	Character Strength	

Adapted from DA (2012a; 2012b; 2019a); HAGS (1988; 1999; 2013).

Table 5. Character Strengths Not Common in the U.S. and Hellenic Armies

U.S. Army	HA	Academic Literature Classification	
		(Peterson & Seligman, 2004)	(Crossan et al., 2017)
Teamwork	-	-	Character Dimension
Persistence	-	Character Strength	-
Self-awareness	-	-	Character Element
Life-long learning	-	Character Strength	-
Leadership	-	Character Strength	-
-	Humor	-	Character Strength
-	Wisdom	Character Strength	-

Adapted from DA (2012a; 2012b; 2019a); HAGS (1988; 1999; 2013).

There are some different approaches described by the U.S. Army and the academic literature in the classification of some character strengths. The first observation is that the U.S. Army has incorporated into its values individual qualities that the literature considers character strengths or character dimensions, such as *integrity*, *courage*, and *respect*



(Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Crossan et al., 2017). Additionally, the U.S. Army addresses leaders' qualities of *resilience*, *judgment*, *fairness*, *self-awareness*, *self-regulation*, *patience*, and *teamwork* (Crossan et al. (2017) refer to it as *collaboration*), which the literature considers related under fields other than character or outside the ALDM construct. For example, in the ALDM, the U.S. Army discusses *resilience* under the "presence" attribute; *judgment* under the "intellect" attribute; and *fairness*, *self-regulation*, and *self-awareness* under the "develops" competency (DA, 2019a). Moreover, the U.S. Army discusses the character concept in two parts of the same publication. Both in ADP 6–22 and ADRP 6–22, character is discussed as a separate part and under the "leads by example" competency. All these create confusion and potential issues in the development process of these character qualities. Moreover, even though the U.S. Army discusses *knowledge* within its several publications, it does not discuss it as a military individual's inner quality. Furthermore, the U.S. Army repeatedly mandates the manifestation of an overarching internal quality for its leaders, *honor*. The Army considers *honor*, the compliance of leaders with Army values (DA, 2019a) and the leaders being imbued with morality, decorum, and the character strengths of *empathy* and *respect* (West Point, 2018). Finally, the U.S. Army does not discuss in its publications character strengths such as *hope* and does not adequately underline the significance of *persistence*, which are both fundamental for deployments and operations (Chopik et al. 2021). What is interesting, though, is that the U.S. Army Academy introduces *leadership* as a strength of character, which is in alignment with Peterson and Seligman's (2004) classification.

We observe different approaches to this topic by the HA as well. The HA also considers the qualities of *patience* and *prowess* (synonymous with courage) as values, whereas the academic literature considers these qualities as character strengths or character dimensions (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Crossan et al., 2017). In general, the HA identifies a plethora of character-related qualities in its publications. However, there is no clear and explicit correlation between these qualities and character. Moreover, even though it provides explanations or urgings to the leaders relating to the previously described traits, the HA does not define them adequately (HA, 1988). Furthermore, the HA refers to the strength of *honesty* only in the annual leaders' evaluation reports (HAGS, 2001a). Finally,



as depicted in Table 5, even though the character element of *self-awareness* has been discussed since the time of Hellenic classical antiquity through the quote “Γνῶθι σεαυτόν” [Know yourself] (Kaktos Publications, 2022), the HA has not incorporated it as a character quality for their leaders to possess.

Among the character strengths that the two armies address, there are some that the academic literature distinguishes. Wright and Lauer (2013) discuss the “character profiles” concept and provide the top five character strengths for several occupations. They conclude that the top five character strengths for occupations that have to deal with extreme circumstances are *valor*, *integrity*, *industry*, *critical thinking*, and *self-regulation*. Additionally, Gayton and Kehoe (2015), who focus their research not on the military in general but on the Australian Special Forces, ended up with the character strengths of *teamwork*, *integrity*, and *persistence*. Overall, we can conclude that the character strengths on which the two armies agree with the academic literature are those of *courage*, *integrity*, and *self-regulation*. That means that these character strengths are significant for the military environment. Additionally, significant are the strengths of *teamwork* and *persistence*, which only the U.S. Army shares with the academic literature.

All the previously listed character strengths of leaders are significant, but there is one that has a prominent position: *integrity*. We meet this strength repeatedly both in the academic literature and the two armies’ publications (Becker, 1998; Barlow et al., 2003; Thompson et al., 2008; Bass & Bass, 2009; Grahek et al., 2010; Wright & Lauer, 2013; Anderson & Anderson, 2016 DA, 2015b; Furlong et al., 2017; DA, 2019a; HAA, 2018; Ploumis, 2021; Mpourantas (2017). *Integrity* is multi-faceted and includes individuals being honest with themselves and others, being committed—either publicly or privately—to their internal beliefs and intentions and taking responsibility for their actions and behaviors (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The fact that civilian and military literature emphasizes this character strength indicates that it has a significant and dominant position in all kinds of leaders.

As an overall conclusion from Tables 4 and 5 and approaching the character strengths concept from a broad perspective, we can say that the two armies cover most of



Peterson and Seligman's (2004) classification of virtues. However, both this classification as well as the character dimensions classification (Crossan et al., 2017) provide a vast area of research on leader character that is unexplored by the two militaries. First, they focus mostly on the virtue of courage (*integrity, resilience, and persistence*), which is the emotional power that entails using willpower to achieve goals despite internal or external obstacles. The U.S. Army specifies it even further, introducing *courage in the face of death*, whereas the HA leaves it in general. Additionally, the two armies address the virtue of humanity (*respect and empathy*), which relates to interpersonal skills for the creation of a friendly environment; the virtue of *justice (fairness)*, which establishes a healthy environment; the virtue of *temperance (humility, self-regulation)*, which protects individuals against excess; the virtues of *wisdom and knowledge (judgment, life-long learning)*; and finally, the HA, introducing the character strength of *humor*, touches a little bit on the virtue of *transcendence*, which includes strengths that provide meaning to human existence.

Before moving on, it is important to emphasize the notion of the “mean,” a concept that exists in the academic literature, but the two armies do not address it. Crossan et al. (2013) define it as the “virtuous mean,” and Wright and Lauer (2013) as the “golden mean,” which refers to keeping character strengths in balance so that they do not become vices. The first to discuss this notion was Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*. He did that by introducing the term “Virtue,” which is a moral habit (*exis*) that lies between two extremes, deficiencies, and excesses. If the individual's character strengths reach one edge or the other, the strengths become vices. Crossan et al. (2013) provide examples of these deficiencies and excesses using Peterson and Seligman's (2004) character strengths classifications, as depicted in Appendix C. However, Aristotle did not consider the “mean” to be a fixed or mechanical process. Rather, he considered it a relative point dependent on the individual and the situation, a result of practical judgment (Moskovitis, 1993). It is a significant concept that the two armies should take into consideration.



### C. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER

The positive impact of character on trust is common in the two armies, as they both emphasize the contribution of character to the cultivation of trust within the military organization. The U.S. Army does that in its Army ethic. Specifically, it states that character creates “trusted Army professionals”(DA, 2015, p. 2-6). The building of trust is a foundational obligation of the U.S. Army leader. The reason is that trust spreads positive influence in every direction across the chain of command, generates confidence in the organization, and enhances initiatives. The character strengths that are most correlated with the cultivation of trust are *fairness* and *respect* (DA, 2019a). While the HA associates character with trust, it takes a slightly different approach to it than the U.S. Army does. First, the HA embeds it mostly in its civilian publications that are taught in the HAA. Additionally, the HA does not provide a more detailed analysis of how trust affects the military organization. It states, though, that the character strengths that affect the cultivation of trust are *humbleness* or *modesty* and *justice* (HAGS, 2013). We observe here that the two armies agree on the importance of the character strength of *fairness/justice* to the cultivation of trust in the military organization.

Beyond trust, the U.S. Army highlights the positive impact of character on subordinates and the cultivation of a healthy team environment (DA, 2019a). On the other hand, the HA emphasizes the positive impact of character on the communication of a leader with his or her subordinates as well as the “lead by example” leadership model (HAGS, 2013). The U.S. Army, although it uses the same model, does not directly correlate it with the character. We observe here that there is a connection between leaders’ character and their subordinates. However, this is in general terms, and it is not correlated with specific character strengths. Additionally, the HA does not include the team level as a concept, and subsequently, it does not consider how it is specifically impacted by the character of the leader.

At the individual level, the U.S. Army connects character to the formation of the Army leader’s identity, which is the leader’s consciousness of his or her role as leader and of his or her position in the military structure. The character strength of *self-awareness*



supports this character's contribution. Additionally, the U.S. Army correlates character with leaders' right decision-making. For example, the character strength of *courage* helps military leaders to undertake actions despite fear and other potential obstacles (DA, 2012a). Furthermore, the character strength of *resilience* helps leaders deal with the adversities of deployments or combat situations (Chopik et al., 2021). Finally, the U.S. Army states the character's positive role in the reduction of stress that individuals in the military environment face by working in a challenging and complicated environment (DA, 2019a). At that level, the HA emphasizes the positive impact of character on the leaders' perception of reality, the mission, and the right decision-making. It does not provide us with specific character strengths that support this goal. Moreover, like the U.S. Army, the HA uses the word "right" repetitively, referring to leaders' actions or decision-making. As we did in character definitions, we meet again terms like "right," in connection with decisions and actions, which we consider quite abstract. Additionally, neither of the armies gives an adequate explanation about what the criteria are that define an action or decision as right.

Comparing how the two armies approach the impact of character on military organization against how the literature does it on business, we see both similar and different approaches. Additionally, there are some areas that the two armies must explore more deeply. The two armies agree with the academic literature on the positive impact of character in the leaders' decision making (Seijts et al., 2015) and in their followers (Monzani et al., 2021). Moreover, the U.S. Army agrees with the literature on the contribution of character in leaders dealing with adversarial situations and in the reduction of work stress (Seijts et al., 2022). However, the literature discusses several other impacts of character. In particular, the literature states that character dimensions, as described in Figure 1, contribute to an individual's well-being (Wright & Lauer, 2013); the character strengths of *zest*, *hope*, and *gratitude* contribute to job satisfaction (Gander et al., 2012); the strength of *wisdom* contributes to higher leaders' work and task performance (Avey et al., 2012), not only their own performance but that of their followers as well (Monzani et al., 2021). Additionally, the academic literature gives special emphasis to the positive impact of character on organizational well-being and effectiveness, which is a result of leaders' character strengths of *zest*, *hope*, *fairness*, *judgment*, and *integrity*. These areas of



character's influence are decidedly related to the military profession which the two armies have left unexplored.

#### **D. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER**

While there is some overlap in how the two armies develop character, there are many differences. For example, the U.S. Army, as opposed to the Hellenic Army, gives special weight to this process at the United States Military Academy (West Point). Through West Point's *Developing Leaders of Character* manual, the U.S. Army demonstrates the significance it assigns to character development for future military leaders. The development of leaders of character is foundational for the West Point. The notions of "military leader" and "character" are largely synonymous. In other words, the notion of a "military leader" makes sense only if that leader is imbued with specific character strengths. In turn, those character strengths are developed. This development process is a continuous cycle that involves challenging experiences, reflection on those experiences, and new knowledge and capacities, as depicted in Figure 3. The notion of "experiences" as a tool for shaping military leaders' character is common in other U.S. Army publications, too (DA, 2019a; DA, 2012a). Along with the experiences tool, the U.S. Army incorporates the development of character into the three pillars of education, training, and inspiration (DA, 2015a; West Point, 2018), as well as through the counseling, coaching, and mentoring of subordinates by their leaders (DA, 2012a). Moreover, the U.S. Army considers the tools of reflection and feedback to be significant in that process (DA, 2015a; West Point, 2018). However, the military organization per se contributes to the development of the leaders' character; an ethical environment can make everybody "think, feel, and act ethically" (DA, 2012a, p. 3-5). Finally, the U.S. Army highlights the significance of physical training on character development, specifically personal courage, stating that the development of physical courage is strongly correlated with the development of moral courage (DA, 2019b).

The HA agrees with the U.S. Army on several points. First, the HA also believes that everyday experiences, along with the appropriate knowledge, are significant factors in the development of the leaders' character (HAGS, 2013). Moreover, the HA highlights the



importance of tools of education, self-reflection, and mentoring. Finally, the HA examines these tools not only as part of the character development process but also as part of the development process of leaders, as the U.S. Army does for the most part.

Comparing the two armies to what exists in the academic literature, it is evident that they agree first on the foundational issue that character can be developed. This approach agrees with the Aristotelian approach, according to which character can be developed through experiences and actions (Moskovitis, 1993). Regarding experience, this is another area in which the armies agree with the academic literature. However, the academic literature narrows this tool and discusses the contribution of “crucible” experiences. These kinds of experiences, which have the power to alter individuals’ deeply rooted perceptions or even identities, may have a positive impact on the character development of individuals (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Here we observe another common ground between the literature and the U.S. Army. Lester (2021) highlights the risks and potential negative impacts of crucible experiences, which is consistent with Chopik et al. (2021), who state that the contribution of extreme adversity such as deployments or combat experiences is questionable.

In the education domain, though, there are some differences. While the armies only mention education as a tool, the academic literature goes deeply into the education domain, describing a plethora of tools for the development of character, such as case studies, collaborative learning, and narratives. The literature proposes even the assignment of character as a dedicated course (Crossan et al. 2013). Moreover, the U.S. Army has incorporated the tools of reflection and formal feedback, which literature considers significant in that process (Byrne et al., 2018). Finally, the U.S. Army covers another field that the literature considers important for the character development process: organizational culture. The literature further suggests the establishment of moral norms and organizational learning procedures at a higher level. That way, there will be common ground inside the organization on what aspects of character should be developed and in what direction (Kouzes & Posner, 2005; Hunter, 2008; Hannah & Avolio, 2011).



Continuing with this analysis of the U.S. Army, the overall sense is that it assigns the burden and responsibility of character development primarily to individuals. We do not see in the U.S. Army publications a comprehensive description of the tools, mechanisms, and disciplines within the military structure that are responsible for the development of character in its leaders. Another observation is that the identified tools are not specialized. For instance, the “self-development” tool does not detail how a leader can self-develop. Using what tools and in what direction can this be accomplished? Finally, the U.S. Army states that the ethical environment contributes to the cultivation of ethical leaders. What principles does an ethical environment consist of, and what strategies does the Army have for the establishment of this environment? Does it already exist, or is it a desirable goal? All these kinds of questions are not answered.

#### **E. THE ASSESSMENT OF CHARACTER**

Both the U.S. and the Hellenic Army follow the same basic process for assessing leaders’ character. They assess it through the annual evaluation report (DA, 2019b; HAGS, 2001a). The same applies to the process for the cadets in the respective armies’ academies (West Point, 2018; HAA, 2018). However, as far as the U.S. Army is concerned, the only character strengths that are included in the corresponding forms are *integrity, courage, respect, and empathy*. On the other hand, the HA evaluates *courage against physical threats, honesty, and justice*. As we observe, these are only part of the character strengths compared to what exists in their leadership publications.

The character evaluation process for the HA stops here. However, the U.S. Army uses other self-assessment tools as well, which are not part of an official evaluation. First is the “Azimuth Check” (Army Resilience Directorate, n.d.). The purpose of this tool is to provide insight into leaders’ and soldiers’ inner worlds in terms of their mental health and their character. Another tool is the ILDP, which helps leaders identify their strengths and weaknesses and subsequently develop their leadership skills. The MSAF program enhances this assessment by providing a more thorough and impartial assessment of leaders’ performance, skills, and behavior. Both tools are not part of the leader’s character development process per se but rather part of the broader development process for leaders;



character development is subsumed by the leader development process (DA, 2018). All in all, the U.S. Army is closer to the basic character assessment tool that exists in the literature, which is the VIA-IS questionnaire (Peterson & Seligman, n.d.). However, as it happens in the character development process, the U.S. Army seems to put the burden of assessment on the leaders' shoulders. They self-assess and share the results with their peers or superiors, getting the corresponding feedback, but the whole process lacks objectivity. It is, for the most part, based on the assessed answers. Additionally, those who provide feedback may be biased and provide inconsistent or misleading feedback.

## **F. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study focuses on the concept of character in military leaders. Specifically, it examines the character strengths these leaders should be imbued with to be successful and to be able to contribute to the military organization's efficiency. Additionally, this study discusses the influence of character as well as the challenging topics of character assessment and development. These topics were discussed by comparing the perspectives of the U.S. and Hellenic armies. As a result, we make recommendations to each army.

### **1. U.S. Army**

Based on the areas we addressed and analyzed in this chapter, we offer four recommendations to the U.S. Armed Forces. Senior leaders from U.S. Armed Forces can examine these recommendations and revise the concept of character within the military environment and improve the existing mechanism for character development within their leadership corps. As we expand on in the following paragraphs, these recommendations include:

#### ***a. Redefine Character and Revise the ALDM***

The U.S. Army addresses the concept of character of its leaders in the West Point manuals and several other publications through the Army ethic and ALDM (DA, 2019a, 2015b; West Point, 2018), making it clear to everyone that a leader's character matters, and that is significant. However, the U.S. Army should make some improvements in how it defines character. Currently, there are a few definitions spread across several publications



that complement each other but they are not entirely consistent, so the U.S. Army should settle upon a comprehensive definition of character and ensure that this definition is reflected across doctrine and policy. Additionally, phrases within the definitions such as “what is right” or “what is appropriate” (DA, 2012a, p. 3-1) could be avoided. Given the importance of character and the need for a broad understanding of character across all ranks and experience levels, a military should be specific in the language it uses and minimize space for any (mis)interpretation. Finally, the U.S. Army should embrace the academic literature’s perspective of “character-based leadership,” which aims for the improvement of the organization at both the individual and the social level.

***b. Revise the Character Strengths of Military Leaders and Classify Separate Character Strengths among the Branches***

The U.S. Army should first distinguish the character strengths of military leaders from the military values because they are not the same (Wright & Lauer, 2013). Additionally, the Army should review, conclude, and determine what character strengths are significant for a successful contemporary military leader. This determination may have two parts. First, there may be character strengths that are significant for any military leader. On the other hand, the U.S. Armed Forces may specify character strengths of leaders in its several branches. Even in the same military organization, each branch has a different culture, different processes, or a different mission, so leaders may need to display different aspects of character. This is similar to the “situational themes” that Peterson & Seligman (2004) discuss. Finally, the U.S. Army should incorporate all character strengths into the character attribute in the ALDM (DA, 2019a), since now character strengths are spread throughout the ALDM subsections, making it unclear to leaders which traits are related to character strengths and which are not.

***c. Distinguish the Impact of Character at All Levels, Including the Out-of-the-Military Environment Impact***

The U.S. Army should clearly distinguish the positive impact of character at all levels: individual, team, and military organization. Additionally, at the individual level, leaders’ well-being should not be neglected, because their well-being influences



organizational effectiveness. Moreover, the happier they are, the more productive they will be in their everyday tasks (Gander et al., 2012). In any case, the U.S. Army should correlate this impact with specific character strengths. Leaders should know the degree of contribution of each character strength and what they may influence if they manifest a specific strength.

***d. Transfer the Responsibility of the Leader's Character Assessment and Development to the Military Organization***

The U.S. Army should review the character development process. First, the development of the character of a leader starts at West Point, at the Army's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), and within the Officer Candidate School (OCS) (DA, n.d.). West Point has already specified a character development process and incorporated many of the tools that the academic literature discusses. At the organizational level, the U.S. Army could focus more on the experiences of the leaders, especially the crucible experiences. The military environment has the potential to use this tool, but leaders must manage risk when sponsoring crucible experiences in training (Lester, 2021). For that reason, the U.S. Army must be very careful in the adoption of the "crucible experiences" character development method.

Ultimately, it is the organization's responsibility to develop and assess the character of its leaders. So, the U.S. Army should clearly establish the expectations, directions, training tools, and processes for the leaders' character development. Additionally, the U.S. Army needs to establish tools to measure leaders' character strengths. Training and education in this field should be both conceptual and tangible so junior leaders can learn how to apply the concepts in the operational Army and understand the objective outcomes of doing so. Then, leaders need to be assessed on their developmental progress. However, the feedback should not be from peers or superiors but from specialized personnel, such as trained coaches and behavioral clinicians, such as psychologists. In any case, an easy and immediately available tool the U.S. Army may implement is the use of character-related vocabulary. Through the discussion of character using specific terms, the U.S. Army can instill basic character concepts in its leadership (Wright, 2015; Crossan et al., 2017).



Finally, all the basic character-related material should be incorporated into basic Army leadership doctrine. That means that the U.S. Army may need to update and extend the existing character-related parts of these documents. There, the U.S. Army can communicate the general principles of character, the definition of character, the character strengths that every military leader must be imbued with, and how and where character influences the military environment. Additionally, it can provide the basic tools and processes for character assessment and development. Then, based on these general directions, the U.S. Army can update its branches' publications on the character domain, specifying the corresponding character strengths, their influence, as well as their development and assessment processes.

## **2. Hellenic Army**

In our recommendations to the Hellenic Army, we follow the same reasoning as we did with the U.S. Army, offering four recommendations to the Hellenic Armed Forces. Senior leaders can examine these recommendations and direct the incorporation of the concept of character into military publications and into general discussions within the military environment to a larger extent. As expanded on in the following paragraphs, these recommendations are:

### ***a. Redefine and Expand Discussion of the Character of a Leader***

The HA needs to adopt a unified approach to defining the character of its leaders and subsequently strengthening the organization's understanding of this topic. The most important step in that process is the establishment of an overall framework that includes core competencies and attributes. Then, the HA should provide a more comprehensive definition of character. Additionally, as in the U.S. Army, the HA should avoid debatable connections between adjectives such as "right" with actions or decisions. Furthermore, the HA should distinguish "character" from "personality." This distinction, beyond the fact that it makes these terms clearer to military leaders, will help the HA in the character development process. Finally, the HA should adopt the "character-based leadership" model as presented in the academic literature (Wright & Lauer, 2013) in order to strengthen the military organization both at an individual and the social level.



Most importantly, we believe that the overall approach to character begins with the military academy. One option for the HA is to produce a comprehensive character-related manual that analyzes the concept of character and provides a character development process and assessment. Another option is to propose an update of the existing law, which determines the function of the HAA, and incorporate these materials into it. This effort would be a great opportunity for the HA to revise and update its leadership manuals, as some of them date from 1988.

***b. Revise the Identified Character Strengths and Classify Distinct Character Strengths among the Branches***

Either in general leadership publications or the HAA manuals, after the establishment of a solid military leadership character approach, the HA should also distinguish the strengths from the military values, as they are not the same (Wright & Lauer, 2013). Subsequently, the HA should review the existing character strengths and then define and explain what character strengths are significant for the HA's leaders. Afterward, following the same reasoning we applied for the U.S. Army, each HA branch, based on this basic model, should define what character strengths are considered meaningful.

***c. Address the Multi-level Impact of the Military Leader's Character***

The HA should discuss even further the impact of character on leaders because this discussion so far is limited and concentrates on general terms. For example, the HA discussion today mostly focuses on the positive impact on decision making and the leader's perception of the mission (HAGS, 1989). In order for this discussion to be meaningful, the HA should cover all aspects of the impact of character: on individuals, on teams, and on the military organization (Wright & Goodstein, 2007). Moreover, it should approach areas from a broader perspective, discussing various issues that the Hellenic publications do not discuss, such as job satisfaction (Gander et al., 2012), stress at work (Avey et al., 2012), and personal and organizational well-being (Wright & Lauer, 2013; Wright & Goodstein, 2007). That way, the military leaders will better perceive the significance of character and will be motivated to work harder for its development.



*d. Develop Comprehensive Principles, Mechanisms, and Tools for the Development of Character in Military Leaders*

The HA should focus on the character development process. The HA has touched on this topic so far superficially through the leader development process. From my perspective, the lack of any character development process is more of an advantage than a disadvantage for the HA. It will be easier for the HA to build the mechanisms for the assessment and development of character of its leaders “from scratch” than it would be to revise existing ones. The foundation of this process should be the establishment of the leader’s core traits and competencies framework and the determination of the leader’s character strengths. These are prerequisites for the HA to provide directions, processes, and tools to develop these strengths better. This should be done both at a general level and at each branch’s level, as each branch may focus on different character strengths and follow different processes. Additionally, as we recommended for the U.S. Army, institutionalized crucible experiences (Lester, 2021), education, and the use of character-related vocabulary in everyday work life are powerful tools. The HA may study these tools, incorporate them into the leadership manuals, and implement them. Research psychologists should play a prominent role in that process. Finally, regarding character assessment, the HA can study tools such as the VIA-IS questionnaire (Peterson & Seligman, n.d.), and then develop its own. In general, the HA should establish processes for the character assessment of its leaders, which should be based on objective criteria.

**G. SUMMARY**

In this chapter, we used a combination of content analysis and case studies comparison to analyze our findings from the literature review chapter and to approach our research questions. We identified similarities and differences, both between the two armies and between each army and what exists in the academic literature. Based on this analysis, we provided some recommendations that the two countries’ senior military leaders can consider in their effort to create more efficient military leaders, who, in turn, may contribute to the creation of more effective military organizations. In the next chapter, we summarize our research, answer the research questions, and provide some areas for future research.



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## IV. CONCLUSION AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study examines the concept of the character of leaders within the military environment. In our effort to answer our research questions, we used a combination of content analysis and case study comparison methodologies. In particular, we compared the U.S. Army with the Hellenic Army in terms of their respective approaches to addressing the concept of character and its impact on military organizations, character strengths, and character development and assessment. Additionally, we compared each army's approach against how character is conceptualized and operationalized in the business and psychology academic literature.

Our analysis revealed that although the U.S. Army discusses the concept to some extent, there are several areas for improvement in the character domain. In particular, the U.S. Army should make some improvements in defining “character” and clarifying some perplexing areas in the character strengths field, specifically separating *character strengths* from *values* and incorporating all character strengths under character traits in the ALDM. Additionally, the U.S. Army should fill some gaps in its understanding of the impact of character, especially on how to develop the character of the leaders. On the other hand, the Hellenic Army should approach this domain holistically and start with the foundational concepts underpinning character. Specifically, it should create a construct that includes all the significant key traits and competencies of a leader. Then, the HA should extend the discussion to the leader's character, separate *character strengths* from the Hellenic military *values*, and provide high-level directions for the assessment and development of character.

### A. ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this research, we answer three research questions as follows:

- 1. Based on the Comparison between the U.S. and the Hellenic Armies, What Character Strengths Contribute to the Emergence of an Effective Military Leader?**

The academic literature provides and repeatedly uses two basic constructs regarding the individual's character: the “classification of character strengths” (Peterson &



Seligman, 2004) and the “character dimensions and associated elements” (Crossan et al., 2017), which are analyzed in Appendices A and B, respectively. We used these constructs to examine which character strengths the U.S. and Hellenic armies consider meaningful for their leaders. Before we move on, we should point out that *integrity* is the strength of character that literature repeatedly highlights.

Unexpectedly, we discovered that the two armies have a lot of common ground in this field, as depicted in Table 4. The strengths that they both consider significant are the following: (i) *integrity*, (ii) *courage*, (iii) *respect*, (iv) *empathy* (HA uses the term *emotional understanding*), (v) *humility*, (vi), *resilience*, (vii) *judgment* (HA uses the term *righteous judgment*), (viii) *fairness* (HA uses the term *justice*), (ix) *self-regulation*, (x) *knowledge*, and (xi) *patience*. However, the armies diverge in some areas, as shown in Table 5. For example, the U.S. Army also considers the following character strengths especially meaningful: (i) *teamwork*, (ii) *persistence*, (iii) *self-awareness*, (iv) *life-long learning*, and (v) *leadership*. Conversely, the HA considers (i) *humor* and (ii) *wisdom* important character strengths (DA, 2012a; 2015b; 2019a; HAGS 1999; 2013; 2021; Mpourantas, 2017; Ploumis, 2021).

Both armies have issues with how they address the corresponding character strengths. The U.S. Army spreads character strengths throughout the ALDM under traits other than *character*. The HA discusses the leader’s character strengths both in the military and in civilian publications without incorporating them into a specific construct. Additionally, both armies consider some character strengths as military *values*, whereas, according to the academic literature, these terms are not the same (Wright & Lauer, 2013).

## **2. How do the U.S. and the Hellenic Armies Approach the Impact of the Military Leader’s Character on Their Followers, the Military Organization—and Even on Themselves?**

The academic literature discusses the impact of character on three levels. First, character positively affects leaders as individuals both in their personal and professional lives. Second, character affects the team level positively, improving followers and helping them deal with challenging situations (Wright & Goodstein, 2007; Seijts et al., 2015;



Monzani et al., 2021). Third, character has a strong impact on organizational well-being and effectiveness. Here, the literature addresses the other side of the coin, stating that organizational culture can affect the individual's character as well (Hunter, 2008).

The U.S. Army addresses the three-level positive influence of character, as well as the significance of the organizational climate (DA, 2019). In particular, the U.S. Army states that character helps leaders in decision making (DA, 2019). Additionally, character affects the leader's and followers' ability to deal with challenging situations and the stress that military life produces (DA, 2019). Additionally, a leader's character plays a significant role in whether his or her followers accept the leaders in this role or disapproves of the leader (DA, 2015). Moreover, the U.S. Army emphasizes the significant contribution of character to the cultivation of trust, both at the team and the organizational levels (DA, 2015). The HA, however, does not make a clear distinction among the levels of impact that character has and instead emphasizes the positive influence on leaders' decision making and perception. Additionally, the HA highlights the positive influence of character on communication and the creation of a good climate between leaders and followers (HAGS, 2013). Both armies neglect to address the positive impact of character on leaders as citizens and individuals outside the military environment, which is somewhat troubling given that most service members in both armies will eventually leave the military and take on civilian roles within communities.

### **3. What Tools do U.S. and the Hellenic Armies Use for the Assessment and the Development of Character within the Military Context?**

The academic literature consistently suggests that character can be developed (Byrne et al., 2018). This can be done through several pathways: individually, through others, and through the organization (Crossan et al., 2013). The most significant way for an individual's character to be developed is through experience, and crucible experiences seem to be particularly relevant (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). However, for this kind of experience to be effective, it should be done carefully by properly resourced organizations, with sufficient safety mechanisms and risk assessments (Lester, 2021). There are several tools for doing just that, mostly inside the educational environment or military



organizations (Crossan et al., 2013; Wright, 2015). Finally, organizational culture plays a crucial role in the individual's character development because it develops a group of character structures that, in turn, shape the individual's character within the organization.

The U.S. Army emphasizes character development at the United States Military Academy (West Point, 2018). Several U.S. Army publications focus on the leader's development and consider character development an indirect part of this process (DA, 2015a; 2018; 2019). The U.S. Army also emphasizes the role of experiences in this process (DA, 2012a; 2019a). Additionally, except for reflection and feedback (DA, 2015a; West Point, 2018), the U.S. Army refers to general tools within the military educational domain. However, the U.S. Army discusses the efforts in developing the character of leaders mostly at the individual level, which is something that should be re-examined. Comparatively, the HA takes a minimal approach to this topic, just mentioning the tools of experience and knowledge.

In the character assessment domain, the literature considers this process as significant and a step that should precede character development (Wright, 2015; Seijts et al., 2020). The most frequently used character assessment tool in the literature is the VIA-IS questionnaire (Peterson & Seligman, n.d.). However, character assessment is not a stand-alone process; it goes along with feedback and reflection from experts (Wright, 2015). Both the U.S. and the Hellenic armies examine aspects of their leaders' character through regular annual evaluations (DA, 2019b; HAGS, 2001a). However, the U.S. Army has developed the "Azimuth Check" (Army Resilience Directorate, n.d.) to assess the overall health and well-being of its soldiers. Additionally, the U.S. Army has incorporated the tools of reflection and feedback from peers and superiors (DA, 2018).

## **B. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In this study, we examined the military leader's character. Even though there may be several aspects to the domain of the military leader's character that need further examination in the future, we will focus on areas that, from our perspective, need further study.



First, military and civilian academia could examine relationships between different leadership styles and the character of military leaders. There are several styles of leadership, such as situational, transformational, authentic, servant, adaptive, and inclusive (Northouse, 2022). Given the significant resources at the disposal of the U.S. and HA armies, academia could be called upon and awarded resources to create novel research approaches to examine the role of character, better determine which character strengths are significant, and clarify the character development process of each of the leadership styles.

Another area that academia could focus on is the character of military organizations. The identification of character at the organizational level is a broad and complex area of study. However, it is significant because this effort will give military organizations the opportunity to review their values and identity, as well as their mission. Additionally, the organizational character helps shape the leader's character, clarify the expectations for leaders and soldiers, and redefine the standards in the recruitment process.

### **C. SUMMARY**

This study underscores the significance of the concept of character within the military environment. Character may affect military organizations on several levels, and, for military leaders, it influences both their professional and private lives. Our research also shows that the concept of character is not a static concept but rather a dynamic one that is related to circumstances. Given the distinctiveness of the military environment, military leaders should be imbued with specific strengths of character to be able to respond to their challenging duties. For that reason, military organizations should establish character assessment tools, policy and resource mechanisms, and interventions for the development of character. Leaders who are strong in character can contribute to creating healthier and more effective military organizations.



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## APPENDIX A. CHARACTER STRENGTHS

Table 6. Classification of Character Strengths.  
Source: Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 29).

<b>Wisdom and Knowledge</b> —cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge
<i>Creativity</i> [ <i>originality, ingenuity</i> ]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
<i>Curiosity</i> [ <i>interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience</i> ]: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake, finding subjects and topics fascinating, exploring and discovering
<i>Open-mindedness</i> [ <i>judgment, critical thinking</i> ]: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; <i>not</i> jumping to conclusions; being able to change one’s mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly
<i>Love of learning</i> : Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one’s own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows
<i>Perspective</i> [ <i>wisdom</i> ]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people
<b>Courage</b> —emotional strengths that involve the exercise of the will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal
<i>Bravery</i> [ <i>valor</i> ]: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it
<i>Persistence</i> [ <i>perseverance, industriousness</i> ]: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; “getting it out the door”; taking pleasure in completing tasks
<i>Integrity</i> [ <i>authenticity, honesty</i> ]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one’s feelings and actions
<i>Vitality</i> [ <i>zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy</i> ]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; <i>not</i> doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated
<b>Humanity</b> —interpersonal strengths that involve tending to and befriending others
<i>Love</i> : Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
<i>Kindness</i> [ <i>generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”</i> ]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
<i>Social intelligence</i> [ <i>emotional intelligence, personal intelligence</i> ]: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick
<b>Justice</b> —civic strengths that underlie healthy community life



<i>Citizenship</i> [social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
<i>Fairness</i> : Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice, not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others, giving everyone a fair chance
<i>Leadership</i> : Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same maintain time good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
<b>Temperance</b> —strengths that protect against excess
<i>Forgiveness and mercy</i> : Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance, <i>not</i> being vengeful
<i>Humility / Modesty</i> : Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; <i>not</i> seeking the spotlight; <i>not</i> regarding oneself as more special than one is
<i>Prudence</i> : Being careful about one's choices; <i>not</i> taking undue risks; <i>not</i> saying or doing things that might later be regretted
<i>Self-regulation</i> [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions
<b>Transcendence</b> —strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning
<i>Appreciation of beauty and excellence</i> [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience
<i>Gratitude</i> : Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks
<i>Hope</i> [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
<i>Humor</i> [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
<i>Spirituality</i> [religiousness, faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort



## APPENDIX B. CHARACTER DIMENSIONS

Table 7. Character Dimensions and Their Definitions.  
Adapted from Crossan et al. (2017, p. 1000).

Dimension	Definition
Judgment	“Makes sound decisions in a timely manner based on relevant information and crucial analysis of facts. Appreciates the broader content when reaching decisions. Shows flexibility when confronted with new information or situations. Has an implicit sense of the best way to proceed. Sees into the heart of challenging issues. Reasons effectively in uncertain or ambiguous situations.”
Courage	“Does the right thing even though it may be unpopular, actively discouraged, and/or result in a negative outcome for him/her. Shows an unrelenting determination, confidence, and perseverance in confronting difficult situations. Rebounds quickly from setbacks.”
Drive	“Strives for excellence. Has a strong desire to succeed. Tackles problems with a sense of urgency. Approaches challenges with energy and passion.”
Collaboration	“Values and actively supports development and maintenance of positive relationships among people. Encourages open dialogue and does not react defensively when challenged. Is able to connect with others at a fundamental level, in a way that fosters the productive sharing of ideas. Recognizes that what happens to someone, somewhere, can affect all.”
Integrity	“Holds oneself to a high moral standard and behaves consistently with ethical standards, even in difficult situations. Is seen by others as behaving in a way that is consistent with their personal values and beliefs. Behaves consistently with organizational policies and practices.”
Temperance	“Conducts oneself in a calm, composed manner. Maintains the ability to think clearly and responds reasonably in tense situations. Completes work and solves problems in a thoughtful, careful manner. Resists excesses and stays grounded.”
Accountability	“Willingly accepts responsibility for decisions and actions. Is willing to step up and take ownership of challenging issues. Reliably delivers on expectations. Can be counted on in



	tough situations.”
Justice	“Strives to ensure that individuals are treated fairly and that consequences (positive or negative) are commensurate with contributions. Remains objective and keeps personal biases to a minimum when making decisions. Provides others with the opportunity to voice their opinions on processes and procedures. Provides timely, specific, and candid explanations for decisions. Seeks to redress wrongdoings inside and outside the organization.”
Humility	“Lets accomplishments speak for themselves. Acknowledges limitations. Understands the importance of thoughtful examination of one’s own opinions and ideas. Embraces opportunities for personal growth and development. Does not consider oneself to be more important or special than others. Is respectful of others. Understands and appreciates others’ strengths and contributions.”
Humanity	“Demonstrates genuine concern and care for others. Appreciates and identifies with others’ values, feelings, and beliefs. Has a capacity to forgive and not hold grudges. Understands that people are fallible and offers opportunities for individuals to learn from their mistakes.”
Transcendence	“Draws inspiration from excellence or appreciation of beauty in such areas as sport, music, arts, and design. Sees possibility where others do not. Has an expansive view of things both in terms of taking into account the long term and broad factors. Demonstrates a sense of purpose in life.”



## APPENDIX C. VIRTUOUS MEAN

Table 8. Character Strengths within the Virtuous Mean versus Deficiency and Excess. Adapted from Crossan et al. (2013, p. 289).

<b>Virtue</b>	<b>Deficiency</b>	<b>Virtuous Mean</b>	<b>Excess</b>
Wisdom	Unoriginality	Creativity	Impracticality
	Closed to experience	Curiosity	Unfocused Interest
	Closed minded	Open mindedness	Lack of judgement
	Apathy	Love of learning	Obsessive
Courage	Cowardice	Bravery	Recklessness
	Laziness	Persistence	Zealot
	Inauthenticity	Integrity	Righteousness
Humanity	Harsh/Cruel	Kindness	Obsequious
	Unfeeling	Compassion	Indulgent
	Stinginess	Generosity	Profligacy
	Socially awkward	Social intelligence	Manipulative
Justice	Treachery	Citizenship	Blind Obedience
	Unjust	Fairness	Undiscerning
	Lack of confidence	Leadership	Dictatorship
Temperance	Unmerciful	Forgiveness	Pushover
	Boastfulness	Humility	Self-depreciation
	Rash	Prudence	Overly Cautious
	Sloth	Self-Regulation	Inflexible
Transcendence	Ungrateful	Gratitude	Suppliant Behavior
	Hopeless	Hope	Foolishness
	Spiritlessness	Spirituality	Fundamentalism



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## APPENDIX D. THE U.S. ARMY VALUES

Table 9. The U.S. Army Values.  
Adapted from Department of the Army (2019a).

U.S. ARMY VALUES	DEFINITION
LOYALTY	Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. constitution, the army, your unit, and other soldiers
DUTY	Fulfill your obligations—always do your best
RESPECT	Treat people as they should be treated
SELFLESS SERVICE	Put the welfare of the nation, the army, and your subordinates before your own
HONOR	Live up to army values
INTEGRITY	Do what is right, legally and morally
PERSONAL COURAGE	Face fear, danger, or adversity (physical and moral)



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## APPENDIX E. HELLENIC MILITARY LEADERS' TRAITS

Table 10. Hellenic Military Leaders' Traits.  
Adapted from Hellenic Army General Staff (1988, pp. 7–8).

TRAIT	EXPLANATION
COURAGE	in other words, the mental strength to face the danger that helped him in the fulfillment of his mission, regardless of the threat of physical dangers that he faces
DETERMINATION	which consolidates subordinates' trust in him, and combined with his ability to make good decisions, eliminates uncertainty, and helps to develop discipline
KNOWLEDGE	to perform his duties properly, to use and supervise his personnel effectively, to plan, to forecast, to solve problems, and to evaluate how well a job was done
INITIATIVE	to deal with needs, problems, and general situations not with the established means and methods, but using his ingenuity
INTEGRITY	characteristics intertwined with the military character, which ensure the leader who possesses them the respect and appreciation of superiors and subordinates
SELFLESSNESS	which endears him to subordinates and ensures their cooperation
JUSTICE	to give each soldier the value he deserves, according to his offer, which makes him acceptable to all his subordinates
RELIABILITY	which helped him gain the esteem, prestige, and trust of his subordinates
RESILIENCE	to act in an exemplary manner under strong mental or physical stress
LOYALTY TO THE NATION AND THE MISSION	to set an example for his subordinates and urge them to do the same



DECENCY	which contributes to the development of happy interpersonal relationships within the team
HUMILITY	In other words, to observe modesty and to treat his subordinates according to the characteristics of each
ENTHUSIASM	that arouses the interest, both his own and that of his subordinates, in the fulfillment of the mission and creates in the unit a spirit of optimism
GOOD BEHAVIOR	with which he immediately wins his subordinates and maintains his dignity in every case
RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT	in order to make correct and quick decisions after collecting and evaluating all the available data
HUMOR	to overcome difficult situations without creating tension



## APPENDIX F. PERCEIVED LEADER INTEGRITY SCALE

The following items concern your immediate supervisor. You should consider your immediate supervisor to be the person whom you feel has the most control over your daily work activities. Circle responses to indicate how well each item describes your immediate supervisor.

**Response choices:** (1) = Not at all; (2) = Somewhat; (3) = Very much; (4) = Exactly

Table 11. Perceived Leader Integrity Scale.  
Adapted from Craig and Gustafson (1998, pp. 143–144).

	<b>Questions</b>
	Would use my mistakes to attack to attack me personally
	Always gets even
	Gives special favors to certain “pet” employees, but not to me
	Would lie to me
	Would risk me to protect himself/herself in work matters
	Deliberately fuels conflict among employees
	Is evil
	Would use my performance appraisal to criticize me as a person
	Has it in for me
	Would allow me to be blamed for his/her mistake
	Would falsify records if it would help his/her work situation
	Lacks high morals
	Makes fun of my mistakes instead of coaching me as to how to do my job better
	Would deliberately exaggerate my mistakes to make me look bad when describing my performance to his/her superiors
	Is vindictive
	Would blame me for his/her own mistakes
	Avoids coaching me because (s)he wants me to fail
	Would treat me better if I belonged to a different ethnic group
	Would deliberately distort what I say
	Deliberately makes employees angry at each other
	Is a hypocrite
	Would limit my training opportunities to prevent me from advancing
	Would blackmail an employee if (s)he thought (s)he could get away with it
	Enjoys turning down my requests
	Would make trouble for me if I got on his/her bad side
	Would take credit for my ideas
	Would steal from the organization



	Would risk me to get back at someone else
	Would engage in sabotage against the organization
	Would fire people just because (s)he doesn't like them if (s)he could get away with it
	Would do things which violate organizational policy and then expect his/her subordinates to cover him/her



## APPENDIX G. CHARACTER ASSESSMENT RATING SCALE

**Instructions:** Below are twelve (12) dimensions of the concept of **character**. Rate the frequency that you feel you exhibit each of the behavioral dimensions.

Table 12. Character Assessment Rating Scale.  
Adapted from Barlow et al. (2003, pp. 579–580).

Never	Seldom			Sometimes		Generally	Always	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

1. **Integrity.** Consistently adhering to a moral or ethical code or standard. A person who consistently chooses to do the “right thing” when faced with an alternate choice.
2. **Honesty.** Consistently being truthful with others.
3. **Loyalty.** Being devoted and committed to one’s organization, supervisors, coworkers, and subordinates.
4. **Selflessness.** Genuinely concerned about the welfare of others and willing to sacrifice one’s personal interest for others and their organization.
5. **Compassion.** Concern for the suffering or welfare of others and providing aid or showing mercy for others.
6. **Competency.** Concern for the suffering or welfare of others and providing aid or showing mercy for others.
7. **Respectfulness.** Shows esteem for, consideration, and appreciation of other people.
8. **Fairness.** Treats people in an equitable, impartial, and just manner.
9. **Responsibility and Self-Discipline.** Can be depended upon to make rational and logical decisions and to do tasks assigned. Can perform tasks assigned without supervision.



10. **Decisiveness.** Capable of making logical and effective decisions in a timely manner. Does not “Shoot from the Hip” but does promptly make a good decision after considering data appropriate to the decision.
11. **Spiritual Appreciation.** Values the spiritual diversity among individuals with different backgrounds and cultures and respects all individuals’ rights to differ from others in their beliefs.
12. **Cooperativeness.** Willingness to work or act together with others in accomplishing a task or some common end or purpose.



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