

Facing Death: The Dynamics of Leadership and Group Behavior in Extreme Situations When Death Strikes Without Warning

Franz Kernic

Abstract Death plays an important role in defining extreme situations. This chapter focuses on the impact of sudden death on group behavior and leadership dynamics. It presents and discusses observations made among a military unit in a peacekeeping operation when death occurred without warning. It also examines sociological research related to this topic, particularly studying the disruptive potential of death, practices and strategies to socially absorb shock, mortality salience and mortality rituals. Then it studies responses to death and representations of death through the lenses of social phenomenology and Levinas' social theory. It argues that this perspective provides us with deeper insights into the human relationship with death and group and leadership dynamics when death strikes. This approach also allows us to acknowledge the importance of the ethical dimension in such situations. Finally, the chapter provides some recommendations for leadership training in order to meet the specific challenges of leading and acting in perilous environments.

Keywords Leadership • Morality • Death • Sociology of death • High-risk environment • Extreme contexts • Military leadership

1 Introduction

Empirical studies and social science theories on leadership and group behavior in extreme contexts and under demanding conditions are still rare in the vast fields of modern leadership literature. Considering both the widely spread desire among people to take their own leadership stories to the extreme and the common assumption that 'real' leadership needs to be proven in extreme contexts and difficult situations, this general lack of serious in-depth analysis may surprise. Of course, the unstable and dynamic world of extreme and perilous conditions makes it

F. Kernic (✉)
ETH Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland
e-mail: fkernic@ethz.ch

difficult for researchers to grasp such leadership dynamics and to build a solid theoretical framework. Extreme situations and conditions are per se outside the normal course of business and leadership. They are rare and somehow different, frequently regarded as an exception to the rule, thus emphasizing the uniqueness of a specific case.

In recent decades, leadership research has started to pay more attention to leadership processes in extreme contexts and under demanding conditions, regardless of all controversies about a commonly accepted definition of 'extreme conditions' (Campbell et al. 2010; Dixon 2014; Giannantonio and Hurley-Hanson 2013; Haas et al. 2012; Nilsson 2011; Yammarion et al. 2010). Whereas one group of scholars has tried to distinguish between ordinary and extreme conditions by looking at the leader's individual stress level, thus defining leadership under extreme conditions as 'leadership under stress' (Larsson 2010; Sjöberg 2012; Hancock and Szalma 2008), others have sought to explore the various 'typologies of extreme contexts' and study the different factors that influence such leadership processes (Hannah et al. 2009, 2010; Miletic et al. 1975). In addition, an increasing number of researchers have attempted to study 'in-extremis leadership' by systematically analyzing the individual stories of leaders, primarily military and police officers as well as firefighters, after experiencing combat, combat-like or life-threatening situations (Kolditz 2006, 2007; Fisher et al. 2010; Sweeney et al. 2011; Dixon 2014).

This chapter focuses exclusively on one specific key aspect of extreme situations: the phenomenon of death and dying. It aims to examine the impact of death on leadership processes and group behavior from a social-phenomenological perspective. The chapter is a sociological sketch with the goal to draw a general picture of the dynamics and challenges of leadership and group behavior in life-threatening situations and under perilous conditions. It also discusses the status of today's sociological research with respect to the phenomenon of death in extreme leadership contexts and introduces a new theoretical approach to this field of study. This approach will be grounded in phenomenological social theory. In sum, the general goal of this article is to contribute to a better understanding of leadership dynamics both leaders and followers are part of. The central question will be the following: How does the sudden death of a group member or of other people nearby affect leadership dynamics and group behavior?

The article is structured in the following way: First, I will present and discuss observations concerning leadership and group behavior in a military context when the sudden death of a comrade occurs. These observations were made in the context of the Austrian Peacekeeping Study conducted among an Austrian UN peacekeeping unit deployed at the Golan Heights in the late 1990s (Haas and Kernic 1998; Kernic and Haas 1999). Second, I will examine the existing sociological literature on death and dying and explore how sociological research on this topic contributes to a better understanding of leadership and group behavior in extreme situations. Third, I will introduce a new theoretical approach to the study of death. I will argue that a phenomenological perspective provides us with new insights into the dynamics of leadership and social interaction under extreme conditions and in

perilous contexts. Finally, I will draw some general conclusions and give a few recommendations for preparing leaders to successfully meet the specific leadership challenges under such circumstances.

2 General Observations

First of all, it is interesting to note that in our everyday language people refer to death in two opposite situations: when it appears to them that (a) there is too much or (b) too little action. On the one hand, people speak about feeling “bored to death” when there is little excitement and no or almost no action. On the other hand, people talk about “facing death” or “escaping death” when they refer to near-death experiences, particularly when human beings manage to escape a life-threatening situation where the course of action apparently reaches its climax and seems to be at its highest and most intense phase. This custom indicates that whenever we speak about death, we already touch upon what is considered the most important extremes and limits of human being: the dichotomy of life and death, activity and passivity, action and non-action, finality and infinity.

The starting point for this analysis is the specific leadership dynamics and social interaction of the studied Austrian military unit in a traditional peacekeeping operation where both above-mentioned aspects seemed intertwined in the ordinary everyday life. In general, facing death meant to the members of the military group, above all, becoming aware of the life-threatening environment to which they were exposed. But at the same time they also distanced themselves from this undesired extreme, which was seen as an unknown and unwanted ‘otherness.’ It was not fear that guided the social interaction of these soldiers but rather a specific sense of vulnerability that was expressed in everyday communication and social life.

In terms of methodology, the chapter builds upon the observations made among this Austrian military peacekeeping unit, but it is important to note that other studies in this field show similarities regarding human behavior and communication when they study social issues of sudden death in a military context (Van den Berg and Soeters 2009; Bartone 2006; Beckmann 2004; Kümmel and Leonhard 2004; Soeters et al. 2007; Vinitzky-Seroussi and Ben-Ari 2000; Carroll et al. 1996; Gibson and Sipes 2008; Harrington-LaMorie 2011; Yen and Lin 2012; Zentrum Innere Führung 1996). This is also true for human behavior in the context of traumatic events related to the confrontation with a high number of casualties in natural disasters or, for example, airline tragedies or terrorist attacks (Katz and Bartone 1998; Benedek et al. 2007; Proulx et al. 2004).

The following section outlines the observations in chronological order. It starts with a short description of the ordinary everyday life of the unit and examines the general perception of and attitudes toward death among soldiers in a risky environment (pre-mortem stage). Then it studies the changes in leadership and group behavior that occurred immediately after the sudden death of a comrade (immediate reaction stage). Finally, it looks at the most important steps on the way back to what

is seen as 'normal life' or normal leadership and group behavior (post-mortem stage).

Observations and interviews with soldiers during the pre-mortem stage clearly showed a general awareness of the risky environment and, in principle, also a certain acceptance of the fact that one could be wounded or even die in the course of this military operation. But the dominant attitude among soldiers toward death and dying was a rather fatalistic stand as well as a general radical denial of this possibility. Such an attitude was heavily reinforced by leadership. One could observe that, in order to avoid agony, depression or any negative impact, the issue of death and dying was largely put aside. When addressed in everyday communication, it frequently took on a personally 'detached' character, something that did not belong to the reality one felt part of. It was rather perceived as an 'otherness', far away from oneself and something that needed to be kept at a certain distance, outside the inner circle of one's own group. Soldiers frequently expressed that they did not volunteer for this military mission in order to die. On the contrary, a certain readiness to kill became visible, so that death would strike the enemy instead of oneself. To most soldiers, life appeared risky in theory but, in practice, death seemed highly unlikely. Consequently, during the interviews many soldiers admitted that they had largely neglected any need to take specific precautions for the 'worst case', i.e. getting killed (e.g., no last will, no emergency plan for families and friends, etc.).

Narratives constructed around the military unit itself drew the picture of a healthy and vivid body, frequently even portrayed as a role-model of youth, activity and eternity. The unit's own invulnerability was emphasized permanently and leadership played a decisive role in this respect. Fitness and body-building seemed to be proper strategies to achieve such a healthy status. Undoubtedly, it appeared an important leadership task to constantly reinforce this picture of a healthy and invulnerable (individual and collective) body and to demonstrate strength as well as the willingness to keep death outside the unit's social boundaries. Interviews and observations also indicate that the established everyday routine was seen as a guarantee that tomorrow would not be very different from today. In fact, most soldiers rarely experienced the precariousness of their mission and everyday life in the pre-mortem stage. A certain feeling of invulnerability appeared to be dominant even in the perilous environment or in dangerous situations. The frequent use of the expression "everything under control" points to an obviously strong desire of the military to act and remain inside the boundaries of controllability and predictability.

Furthermore, the study of group behavior and group language regarding death and dying during the pre-mortem stage brought the following additional aspects up for consideration: (1) The general feeling of boredom frequently resulted in a risky behavior of individuals, particularly on the small group level, due to the fact that courage was highly esteemed and group dynamics came into play. Sometimes, in order to get the desired 'kick', soldiers even put their lives at risk without doubting their own invulnerability. (2) A huge number of soldiers appeared to be highly attracted by violent and horrific deaths in movies. War and horror movies showing heroic (military) behavior with people dying in action were very popular among

soldiers. Of course, such action was always seen as a different reality, something clearly outside their own world. (3) The ordinary everyday language was filled with direct and indirect references to death. In this respect, social conversation employed a number of euphemisms. Frequently used terms were *kill*, *destroy*, *finish*, *terminate*, whereas the word *dead* in its fatal sense was generally avoided or given a different meaning (e.g., the expression ‘dead soldier’ meant an empty bottle or a drunken person). Death itself appeared to be female (note that the German word ‘Tod’ is masculine) expressing both danger and eroticism at the same time. In sum, there was a general trend toward using euphemisms when the phenomenon of death was addressed.

Summing up the general observations during the pre-mortem period, one can say that death and mortality played a central role in soldiers’ everyday language as well as in their social life and interaction. The phenomenon of death was present and absent at the same time (Kernic 1997). The awareness of life-threatening circumstances was highly compensated by a socially constructed assumption of invulnerability based on the concept of a healthy body and a strong, masculine collective identity. This picture of oneself was strongly reinforced through leadership.

The unexpected and sudden death of a comrade changed this situation dramatically. Leadership was immediately challenged, particularly due to the fact that the illusion of invulnerability was brutally destroyed. An immediate shock-wave among all group members occurred. Leadership was practically ‘speechless’ and at least for a short moment one could have the impression that it was the deceased person who was taking over control and the key leadership role. This particular situation can be described best as follows: Regardless of military rank and chain of command, group behavior suddenly seemed to follow an inner voice or secret code of conduct as if the deceased himself¹ had spoken and given certain orders. In this unique situation and under the described circumstances, leadership dynamics and group behavior altered in the following significant ways:

- (1) After a short moment of silence and speechlessness, an intense discourse about death and dying was launched. Everyone seemed to be eager to participate in this discourse which was initiated bottom-up, thus confronting leaders with a number of urgent questions, particularly the so-called why question. Many soldiers raised the question why things did get “out of control”, directly and indirectly blaming leadership and/or outside (hidden) forces for the death of their comrade. In this discourse, the “we” started to play a significant role in the sense that the sudden death was viewed as something that had struck and affected the entire unit. Interestingly, there was the impression that death had struck all of them, i.e. the entire unit, and not only silenced the deceased person. Indeed, the shock wave seemed to paralyze most of the group members.

¹These observations refer to the sudden death of an Austrian soldier on 19 April 1997. A few weeks later, on 30 May 2017, two other soldiers were killed in the line of duty. I am grateful to Harald Haas, co-author of this study, who was observing the troops during the entire study period, conducting interviews and collecting material in the mission area.

This was in fact a disruptive element significantly altering the course of action in leadership and group behavior.

- (2) Group behavior in the immediate aftermath appeared highly influenced by social and cultural norms and traditions. Without waiting for orders, soldiers started, for example, to pray, light candles etc., showing behavior that followed the cultural and social standards of their respective society (cultural habits and socially learned responses). By doing so, they appeared to go through a moment of catharsis, gradually allowing them to re-establish order. Leadership and chain of command were also re-established, particularly due to the fact that the commanding officers followed the same cultural and social standards and gradually took on a new important leadership task: the management of death.
- (3) Despite the fact that the flow of normal everyday group activities was disrupted and significantly altered, a desire to return as fast as possible to what were seen as normal conditions emerged quickly. To achieve such a return, the sudden death needed to be socially organized and managed. In this respect, leadership was first of all preoccupied with the medical and legal management of sudden death. But it was also confronted with a number of new social and ethical issues, particularly linked to individual psychological reactions such as grief, mourning, fear, rage or a general sense of losing personal worthiness. In this context, the issue of a proper (or generally acceptable) justification and interpretation of what exactly had happened gained importance.
- (4) At this stage, group behavior was also characterized by a high curiosity of the survivors. One may even speak of an obsession with details of the events, particularly how and where death struck. One could observe a strong desire to know the concrete circumstances and every step of how death occurred. In particular, soldiers wanted to see the place where death struck.
- (5) Everyday language with respect to the particular circumstances of this death, one could observe a desire among soldiers to make the 'bad death' of their comrade a good death (compare Bloch and Parry 1982; Howarth 2007, p. 134). Soldiers started to gradually speak no longer about a bad, unjust and violent death but rather about a "fatal accident" or "fateful moment."

The third and final stage (post-mortem) can be seen as an attempt at re-settlement and of gradual return to normal group behavior and leadership dynamics, including a reconstruction of pre-mortem narratives. The following group behavior could be observed during this period: (1) The group started to clearly express its urgent need to re-organize social life and re-establish order and normality. To this purpose, everyone got involved in the process of managing death. Though the death of the soldier had led to an initial crisis of leadership, reactions quickly changed their pace and started to reaffirm collective solidarity. (2) Elements of death-accepting and death-defying appeared intertwined in everyday conversation. Specific strategies for buffering the shock were developed, particularly through rituals. No funeral was held at the military camp, but soldiers paid their last respects ('last farewell'). The commanding officer emphasized the importance of their contributions to the success of the mission. It was even argued that their death was not the end of their personal

mission. They were laid to “rest,” “sent home,” “dismissed,” sent on their “final journey”—in other words, the image was created that they had still a mission to accomplish. At this point, some soldiers expressed their conviction that, according to a popular military saying, “old soldiers never die—they just fade away.”

3 The Sudden Death in a High-Risk Environment—An Interpretation in the Light of Sociology

In this chapter I will review sociological approaches to the study of leadership and group behavior in the face of death in extreme contexts. Of course, issues of death and mortality play an important role in many disciplines. Psychology, in particular, extensively studies individual responses to mortality. In this context, it is not only the issue of stress related to the death of a partner, friend or close person (which ranks among the top stressors or life changing events according to the Holmes and Rahe stress scale; Social Readjustment Rating Scale, SRRS) which is of interest for this analysis, but also phenomena such as grief, mourning, bereavement, death anxiety, and fear (see, for example, Stillion and Attig 2015; Gray 1987; Schulz 1978; Lewis et al. 2000; Loo and Shea 1996). But since the focus of this article is on leadership, the social relationship and interaction among individuals as well as leadership and group dynamics are put at the center of this essay. Therefore, sociological aspects of dying and death as well as respective research in the fields of military sociology and leadership in extreme contexts will be at its heart.

In general, sociology’s contribution to the analysis of death and dying as social phenomenon is related to the following three different fields (Howarth 2007, pp. 2–6): (1) Sociology perceives dying and death as social issues (Aiken 2001; Kastenbaum 2002, 2012; Doka 2007). Therefore, its main focus is not the isolated individual in the first place (as is the case with many psychological studies) but rather the social context, the group, society, i.e. the social framework in which individuals interact. (2) Sociology—frequently in close cooperation with anthropology and cultural studies—observes and analyses how different social entities (societies and cultures) deal with mortality. It tends to see social responses to death not as something pre-given by nature but rather as ‘socially constructed’ responses and reactions. (3) By analyzing the social construction and social management of death in society, sociology also provides a privileged access to a better understanding of the leadership dynamics and social interaction of everyday life. In other words: Human social interaction ‘in the face of death’ also reflects key elements of our everyday social interaction in society.

I will take up these three different perspectives and try to put them together as a coherent sociological picture. My main focus will be on the group (military unit) as an entity composed of a certain number of individuals but also being part of a society and culture. On the basis of the observations outlined in the previous chapter, this approach studies a specific sub-culture of society, i.e. the military

culture of a unit exposed to a high-risk environment. Consequently, I will look at: (1) Sociological research that particularly reflects on how death affects social systems and individuals alike. I will show that the respective literature mostly focuses on the *disruptive potential of death*, demonstrating that, as Kearl (1989, p. 69) points out, “such disruptions not only have socially dysfunctional but also functional consequences” and that “social systems have developed social mechanisms for dampening death’s forces of chaos and even transforming them into enhanced social solidarities.” (2) Concrete *shock absorbers* (particularly toward acting under stress) that societies and sub-systems develop in order to deal with death. In this respect, I will examine which specific strategies military units pursue in order to limit the dysfunctional consequences of death. (3) *Mortality salience* and different kinds of *mortuary rituals*. In this context, I will ask how sociological theories help us to understand human behavior in the face of death, particularly regarding in-extremis leadership.

This all can be seen as an attempt to shed light on group behavior and leadership in the event and aftermath of fatal accidents and deaths in extreme contexts.

3.1 *The Disruptive Potential of Death*

Numerous sociological studies see death as an ‘event’ (something we do not have control over) that “removes social actors from their position of responsibility and interdependency” (Kearl 1989, p. 69) within a social system. One could also say that death puts an end to the ‘actorness’ of an actor and therefore needs to be seen, in general terms, as an important disruptive element or moment that affects an operating social system. Regarding the ability of death to disrupt—and even to destroy—social groups, two important sociological observations have been made: (1) As Kearl (1989, p. 84) points out, “the smaller the group and the more unique the contributions of individuals, the greater the ramifications of a single death.” The disruptive potential of death for any social group depends, at least in part, on its actual size. “Entire social systems can be destroyed or fundamentally altered if there are too many deaths of socially critical individuals” (ibid., p. 83). (2) Leaders play a crucial role regarding group coherence and social order. Therefore, the disruptive effects of death on the social order of a group is higher when a group leader dies (ibid., p. 70). This explains why military leaders have been main targets in wars and why snipers usually target commanding officers. “The political disruptiveness of the power vacuum caused by a leader’s death is further amplified by the potential crises of succession” (ibid., p. 70) (e.g., unclear chain of command).

Sociological research has highlighted that for a social system confronted with death, the disruptive potential of death creates a need to absorb shock and to limit the destructive effects of the respective death, particularly when death strikes suddenly and unexpectedly. In order to survive, social order needs to be restored as soon as possible. This clearly indicates an urgent need for collective responses to death, i.e. an agenda to limit and finally erase the disruptive potential of death.

From this perspective, leadership and group behavior in the face of death can be seen primarily as a collective social response to death that is entirely directed towards guarantying the survival and functioning of the social system.

3.2 The Social Shock Absorbers of Death

Kearl (1989, p. 93) emphasized the importance of ‘shock absorbers’ and strategies “to minimize death’s disruptiveness—even possibly taking advantage of its functionality.” Organizations designed to perform well in high-risk environments usually pay much attention to establishing clear rules and procedures for succession in the case death strikes. They also emphasize the importance of operational functioning and consequently ascribe a higher status to functions and social roles than their incumbents. Strong task-orientation seems to be a common way of socially disengaging in favor of mission success and, to a certain extent, depersonalizing those members of the organization who are at highest risk.

These strategies make it possible to take one important step further in the analysis and to reconsider the situation of the observed military unit and its group behavior through the lenses of specific choices that needed to be made in order to absorb the diagnosed shock: The military group itself seemed to apply a mixture of such strategies. Of course, leaders clearly stressed task-orientation and operational functioning but they did not depersonalize the deceased as quickly as one might expect. Interestingly, there was room for the deceased as individuals and their unique personalities. However, their individual stories were gradually replaced by (collective) stories of their survivors. In this respect, organizational behavior showed many similarities with the one that can be observed in smaller communities and tribes, particularly when it comes to the importance attached to collectivist ideas such as ‘brotherhood’ or ‘comradeship.’ The uniqueness of a military organization operating in a high-risk environment obviously consists in its capability of seeing the sudden death of its individual members not through the lenses of an ‘individual drama,’ but rather something that strikes all of them (‘collective drama’), thus requiring new collective efforts to turn death’s disruptiveness into something positive and functional by everyone in the unit.

In addition, there are other practices and strategies that serve as social shock absorbers of death: Funerals (‘mortuary rituals’) are very important due to the fact that they contribute significantly to the reinforcement of social bonds. Of course, such rituals vary among cultures and are of dynamic nature. Nevertheless, they always help to reinforce social structures and personal meaning systems. Mortuary rituals are not only important for the construction, transformation and reinforcement of collective identities but also for individuals’ self-identities. In this respect, it has been argued that sudden death has a strong, sometimes damaging impact on the self-identity of survivors (Howarth 2007, p. 169). According to Howarth (ibid., p. 169), “a sense of self is constructed in relation to the identity of others”;

the “death of a significant other results in the loss of a substantial element of the self.” The urgent need to remove (or at least cover up) any ‘damaged body’ from the scene seems to be linked to damaged self-identity. Only healthy/vivid bodies seem capable of representing a well-functioning social system; and only healthy bodies seem to function well as markers for both collective and self-identity.

3.3 Mortality Salience and Mortuary Rituals—Sociological Aspects

Our basic knowledge about death is based on the experience of dying and death of other people. Human beings know about their own mortality only due to the death of someone else. This marks the baseline for all philosophical, theological, anthropological, psychological and sociological inquiries into the phenomenon of death. In the context of leadership in extreme situations, this issue has been highlighted in particular by modern terror management theory, emphasizing the importance of death salience for group behavior, death anxiety and self-esteem (Solomon et al. 1991). The basic assumption of the concept of ‘mortality salience’ is that the human constitution is characterized by both an intellectual knowledge about one’s own mortality, i.e. the inevitability of death, and a desire to avoid precisely this fate. Therefore, practices of death denial are so prominent in our societies. According to terror management theory, a general feeling of vulnerability and fear of death has a strong impact on the course of human action and behavior, particularly when humans are reminded of their own mortality. In-extremis leadership theory takes up this concept of mortality salience, defining it primarily as an increased awareness of the life-threatening situation people find themselves in high-risk environments. This awareness seems to have specific consequences with respect to leadership performance (Matthews 2008, p. 166ff.). Some studies indicate that mortality salience in high-risk environments may result in higher risk-taking attitudes and behavior among military personnel in dangerous contexts (see the bibliography in Sookermany et al. 2015).

Terror management theory has stimulated a number of research studies which are relevant for this analysis as well. In particular, the studied linkage between self-esteem and mortality salience has significant leadership implications. Harmon-Jones et al. (1997) emphasize the positive effect of high self-esteem on buffering anxiety, arguing that individuals with increased self-esteem are capable of better coping with the effects of mortality salience. In the field of military sociology, one study found that mortality salience could cause an increase in support for military action (Pyszczynski et al. 2006). Conducting empirical studies among the Dutch Stabilization Force in Iraq in 2004, Van den Berg and Soeters (2009, p. 16) showed that “actual death threat has a significant effect on accessibility of death-related thoughts as well as on the self-perception of the soldier’s

performance, motivation, and identification with the armed forces.” Yen and Lin (2012, p. 51) showed that people reminded of their own mortality “were more likely to escalate their level of commitment by maintaining their current course of action.”

Studying mortuary rituals practiced by the military, one discovers a close bond between the nation-state and the military. There are numerous psychological gains that result from a subordination under the modern nation-state. Kearl (1989, p. 301) highlighted its potential of “bestowing immortality” on its citizens, thus allowing a transcendence of death. Consequently, modern nation-states have greatly influenced mortuary rituals and the final rite of passage in both non-military and military contexts. In the military, this linkage between nations-nation states and the military profession becomes visible in symbolic action such as flag draping the coffin or the use of state symbols. From this perspective, soldiers are viewed as representatives of their respective nation-state, thus allowing military leaders to talk about duty, honor and offering one’s life in the service of the country (sacrifice). Risk-taking attitudes and behavior inside the framework of the armed forces appears justifiable and reasonable. Here, leadership shows a political and religious dimension that allows leaders to speak and act on higher (metaphysical) grounds.

Summing up, human behavior in the face of death and individuals’ attitudes toward death and dying are embedded in a broader cultural framework. They are both reflections of culture and acts or efforts toward transforming and reconstructing social life. Existentialism and psychological thought, recently in particular terror management theory, have tended to see a general fear of death among humans as a central source for individual and social behavior, and this not only in extreme or life-threatening situations (Solomon et al. 1991, p. 101ff.).

Leadership plays a significant role in this context, particularly by reinforcing and strengthening a certain social and political order that serves as a crucial basis for sense-making and social identity. Nevertheless, facing death always radically calls into question our self-image and basic views of the world and social life. Thus, Kearl (1989, p. 473f.) is right when he points out that “when a significant other dies, a portion of oneself likewise dies, never again to be reactivated. And, to a large extent, it is this loss of self that is mourned, which is possibly why ambivalence toward the deceased is so often experienced.”

4 Interpretation in the Light of Phenomenology

Western culture has a long tradition of philosophical thinking about finality. Everything seems to have a beginning and an end (alpha and omega; birth and death; creation of the universe and final judgment/final days; etc.). The importance of the concept of ending or finality is also reflected in traditional Western religious systems and beliefs (e.g., eschatology) and social and political discourses (e.g., end of history; *finis terrae*). In this tradition, concepts of death and finality seem to

complement each other, so that we ask a question such as: When precisely does life start and end?

Despite this powerful position of the idea of finality in Western civilization, for many centuries, the phenomenon of death itself did not enjoy any kind of privileged position in philosophical thinking until the 20th century. But the early 20th century philosophy brought death to the center stage of philosophy (and about the same time to the center of attention even in other social sciences). The most famous philosopher in this context is Heidegger (1962) with his influential phenomenological-ontological conception of death, elaborated in *Being and Time*, where he also introduced the notion of 'being-toward-death'.

This part of my essay borrows recent phenomenological studies on the phenomenon of death, in particular Emmanuel Levinas' philosophical interpretation (Morgan 2011; Critchley and Bernasconi 2002; Peperzak et al. 1996; Hand 1989; Lingis 1987; Robbins 2001). In sharp contrast to Heidegger, Levinas proposes a radically different account of the nature and significance of human mortality (Cohen 2006; Kernic 2002). His conception of mortality is important for my analysis due to the following two reasons: (1) Levinas gives a phenomenological and ethical account of the meaning and role of death for the embodied human subject and its relations to other persons. In contrast to Martin Heidegger, Levinas sees human mortality as 'being-against-death' (against the supposed end). He then moves from this point onward toward developing a social theory which allows us to analyze human behavior in the face of death (Levinas 1969, 1978, 1985, 1987, 1998, 1999, 2000a, b). (2) While for Heidegger, death is 'non-relational' (Heidegger 1962; compare his statement on death as possibility-of-being: "all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone", *ibid.*, p. 294), Levinas argues for a continuity of the social relationship even when death strikes (Kernic 2002). Levinas' thoughts focus on the death of the other person, precisely the situation when "care for the other's death takes precedence over care for one's own—all the way to the extreme point of 'dying for' the other" (Cohen 2006, p. 25).

Levinas' social philosophy has become influential, partly due to its contribution to the study of the ethical dimension of human face-to-face encounters, emotions and group behavior. His work aims toward the creation of a new ethical practice, a new relationship between the self and the other built upon an ethical impulse, which marks the bottom line for any social relationship among human beings (Levinas 1969, 1985, 1998, 2000a, b). This new ethical practice is a responsive one that finds its justification in the fact that human beings can never know themselves completely, that the self always needs the other in order to discover and know the common grounds and the world of social interaction (Wyschogrod 2000; Peperzak 1997; Keenan 1999; Bauman 1993; Bernasconi and Wood 1988; Bernasconi and Critchley 1991; Cohen 1986; Hand 1996).

Levinas also draws a picture of general vulnerability, which becomes visible particularly when death strikes (Levinas 1969, 2000a, b; Bidriūnaitė 2007). According to him, human relationship with death is a relationship with mystery (Levinas 1969, p. 235). Confusion and uncertainty become evident and dominant in the face of death, particularly due to the fact that we never know when death strikes.

But he also argues that in this very moment, reminded of the inevitability of death, human beings are granted a glimpse at infinity, the otherness, God. Therefore, death also opens a window in which the death of a single individual is at the same time the birth of something new that becomes possible. The dying or deceased person's obvious 'passivity' (loss of control or loss of agency) results in the birth of a new ethical impulse that reaches out to the world of the living.

Finally, Levinas argues that an ethic impulse is at the center of human interaction and that it develops its specific force particularly when human beings experience the death of the other in a face-to-face encounter. According to him, the other is not powerless, not helpless; on the contrary: the person's ending and their loss of actorness, their helplessness gives rise to the ethical impulse. This impulse helps us to interpret the social rebirth of the group or society, it helps to turn ourselves toward the other, i.e. the self transcends its selfness in the face of the dying or deceased other. This turn marks a 'rupture' (of time), enabling rejuvenation and a new start.

The ethical impulse in the face of death also reveals the structure of the basis of human behavior, i.e. the relationship between the same and the other. Human behavior can be seen as a response to the empirical unique situation ('responsibility'), and therefore human beings can never predict the respective human responses. Furthermore, ethical impulses are 'orders' we may or may not obey, obligations which are not binding, not causal in a deterministic way.

This is exactly where leadership comes into play. Levinas' social theory suggests seeing leadership primarily as 'responsibility.' Leadership refers to the existence of an 'avant-garde,' those who respond first, speak up first, take the initiative. In this sense, leadership in an extreme situation when death strikes without warning, can be defined as the practical-political response of human beings to the ethical impulse deriving from their encounter with death, but also taking into account the situation of the others, the survivors (those who also search for an answer to what has happened).

This perspective provides us with an important key for gaining a deeper understanding of social life. It is a key that gives us privileged access to understand the status and composition of our group, our society, our culture. The way we respond to the self-other-relationship in the face of death, i.e. how we take up the ethical impulse, is, at the same time, how we create and transform our social life, our group, our society.

Why, at the end, then do we not just turn away from the dead comrade and ignore death? Levinas would answer that this is hardly possible because of the strong demand of the ethical impulse, particularly when the social bond between the deceased person and the survivors was strong. Of course, the traditional military answer (in line with our dominant traditional Western culture) is frequently very different to this approach: it rather favors denial and sometimes even reacts to sudden death by hiding the death trajectory as well as dying and grieving processes.

5 Conclusions and Leadership Recommendations

Levinas' social theory radically calls into question all prevailing assumptions in traditional leadership theory that there is an autonomous and free subject that we call 'leader' and that decides and determines the course of action of a group of people following his/her will and orders. His approach rather tends to see leadership as a two-way street, a dynamic interchange between leaders and followers that combines informal as well as formal hierarchies and structures, ways of communication and attempts to influence others in terms of thinking, feeling and acting. Common leadership definitions like, for example, the one provided by Yukl (2006, p. 8) who defines leadership "as the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" are well in line with Levinas' social theory.

It is precisely the phenomenon of death through the exposure of the self to the dying and death of others, to dead bodies in our 'life-world,' that makes us aware of our own mortality and limitations of exercising leadership in the sense of influencing the behavior of others. It is the death of the other that clearly shows us that we are more likely to react and respond than act and independently send out messages created by an autonomous self. We notice that we sometimes even continue to speak to the deceased other as if they were still present and could give us their advice. However, this new emerging awareness in the face of death opens also a window of opportunity for a totally new course of action, for readjustments in thinking and acting of both leaders and followers. In this sense, mortality salience allows leaders to recognize limitations and opportunities, finality and infinity, disruption and continuity. The death of another person is the moment where something new can be born or traditional commitment maintained. Therefore, mortality salience needs to be seen as a potential trigger for change, particularly with respect to group behavior and leadership dynamics.

The main difficulty for organizations designed to operate in high-risk environments lies precisely in this moment of uncertainty and its potential for change and readjustment. Times of (real or potential) changes in group structure and leadership dynamics are generally perceived as stages of instability that weaken group performance. Consequently, it is understandable that a general denial of death appears as a proper escape route, apparently guarantying operational functioning. But the denial of death may turn out to be an 'intellectual drama' for those involved, leaders and followers alike. This drama may even be intensified by a denial of proper individual and collective responses to death and a suppression of natural human reactions. If emotions as well as grieving and mourning processes are suppressed, people will most likely suffer from these experiences later in their lives. Numerous psychological studies have investigated the impact of traumatic events involving death on the development of social and personal life and individual health in the aftermath of such experiences. War veterans have frequently shown delayed stress syndromes or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) associated with suppressed or

delayed grief (Widdison and Salisbury 1989–1990; Harrington-LaMorie and McDevitt-Murphy 2011). Particularly the exposure to dead bodies and body parts (‘body handling’) needs to be seen as a significant psychological stressor (Ursano and McCarroll 1990; Ursano et al. 2003).

With his finger on the ‘ethical impulse’ emerging out of the face-to-face encounter with death and representations of death, Levinas has significantly contributed to uncover the importance of the ethical dimension present in everyday leadership dynamics, particularly in extreme and perilous contexts where life is at stake. In recent years, stress-focused psychologists have tried to take at least part of this dimension into account. The concept of ‘moral distress’ refers to moral decisions made by human beings “knowing the ethically correct action”, but feeling “powerless to take that action” (Epstein and Delgado 2010, p. 1; Jameton 1993; Rushton 2006; Rushton et al. 2016). Based on this concept, some leadership researchers have tried to take a closer look at moral dilemmas and measure them on a scale indicating individual stress levels (Nilsson et al. 2011; Nilsson 2012). But Levinas’ social theory goes much deeper, as he interprets the ethical situation as something existential that is even prior to ontology (Peperzak 1997). Thus, ‘leadership responsibility’ is put at the forefront of all leadership practices forcing together ethical and political dimensions of leadership behavior. According to him, it is precisely when human beings face death that they are reminded of the urgent need to socially connect and overcome their individual ego-centric perspective.

Following this pace, the phenomenological perspective advances an understanding of leadership that first and foremost emphasizes the need of leaders to properly respond to the unique and specific situation they find themselves and others in. This implies that they are expected to ethically and morally act in accordance with this specific situation, taking into account the needs of others as well. Leadership in that sense is much more about the others than about oneself. Many concepts of authentic leadership and adaptive leadership in today’s leadership theory include similar thoughts that are highly relevant for leadership practices and performance in high-risk environments. Taking into consideration the two main dimensions of leadership according to traditional research strands on ‘leadership styles’, ‘orientation toward tasks’ and ‘orientation toward people,’ Levinas’ social theory can be interpreted as stressing the urgent need for both practices combined in the face of death: It seems as if sudden death reminds us of our social obligations toward the other and, by doing so, human beings become capable of renewing social bonds, creating and establishing new forms of social interaction, thus enabling ‘operationality’ in order to achieve certain goals. Leaders with pure task-orientation and an exclusive focus on the accomplishment of a certain task or mission neglect the ethical-political dimension of leadership and endanger mental and physical health of those following them.

What kind of recommendations can be made out of this analysis with respect to preparing leaders to successfully meet the challenges of extreme situations when death strikes without warning? The following three suggestions can be highlighted.

First, strategies and practices toward a denial of death and ignorance of the impact of circumstances where death strikes without warning on both individual and group need to be avoided in leadership training and practice. On the contrary,

death awareness helps to increase the potential of human beings to properly respond to death and acknowledge the wide array of leadership practices to successfully absorb shock related to sudden death and cope with the social and individual implications of such an experience. It appears rather strange that sometimes, military and police academies almost entirely exclude the one crucial issue that is deeply woven into the fabric of their organizational tasks, i.e. to prepare their members to risk their lives to save others, to deal with casualties and wounded comrades, and—in worst case—to die.

Second, leadership training has to take into account crucial ethical aspects of leadership in extreme situations, primarily raising awareness and consciousness among potential leaders about their ‘responsibilities’ toward the others and the unique situation they find themselves in, particularly acknowledging the need to actively contribute to the reinforcement of social bonds and the reestablishment of social order in order to successfully cope with death’s disruptiveness and negative impacts on individual and social life. In this context, they also have to be aware of the possibilities of ‘shared leadership,’ which would allow them to see the potential of a dynamic interplay between more than just one person in charge.

Third, potential leaders have to be trained in the management of death. They have to understand the cultural and social dimension of collective responses to death. They have to know that extreme situations and extreme life experiences demand justifiable and commonly acceptable narratives. In this respect, the key leadership task in and after crucial events and when death strikes without warning is to contribute to collective sense-making (Baran and Scott 2010) and the formation of a new social identity.

References

- Aiken LR (2001) Dying, death, and bereavement. Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ
- Baran B, Scott C (2010) Organizing ambiguity: a grounded theory of leadership and sensemaking within dangerous contexts. *Mil Psychol* 22(Sup. 1):S42–S69
- Bartone PT (2006) Resilience under military operational stress: can leaders influence hardiness? *Mil Psychol* 18:131–S148
- Bauman Z (1993) Postmodern ethics. Blackwell, Oxford
- Beckmann U (2004) Verwundung und Tod – Ursachen und Folgen traumatischer Erfahrungen. In: Gareis SB, Klein P (eds) *Handbuch Militär und Sozialwissenschaften*. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden, pp 306–315
- Benedek DM, Fullerton C, Ursano RJ (2007) First responders: mental health consequences of natural and human-made disasters for public health and public safety workers. *Annu Rev Public Health* 28:55–68
- Bernasconi R, Wood D (eds) (1988) *The provocation of Levinas: rethinking the other*. Routledge, London
- Bernasconi R, Critchley S (eds) (1991) *Re-reading Levinas*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington
- Bidriūnaitė A (2007) The existential experience of one’s death or the ‘dispute’ of M. Heidegger and E. Levinas in the eyes of everyman. *Filozofia* 62(8):704–715

- Bloch M, Parry J (eds) (1982) *Death and the regeneration of life*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Campbell D, Hannah S, Matthews M (2010) Leadership in military and other dangerous contexts: introduction to the special topic issue. *Mil Psychol* 22:1–14
- Carroll B, Hudson L, Ruby D (1996) Complicated grief in the military. In: Doka KJ (ed) *Living with grief after sudden loss: suicide, homicide, accident, heart attack, stroke*. Routledge, London, pp 73–88
- Cohen RA (ed) (1986) *Face-to-face with Levinas*. State University of New York, Albany
- Cohen RA (2006) Levinas: thinking least about death: Contra Heidegger. *Int J Philos Relig* 60 (1/3):21–39
- Critchley S, Bernasconi R (eds) (2002) *The Cambridge companion to Levinas*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Dixon D (2014) *Staying alive: the experience of in extremis leadership*. Electronic dissertation, Case Western Reserve University
- Doka KJ (2007) *Death, dying and bereavement: the human encounter with death*. Routledge, London
- Epstein EG, Delgado S (2010) Understanding and addressing moral distress. *Online J Issues Nurs* 15(3)
- Fisher K, Hutchings K, Sarros JC (2010) The “bright” and “shadow” aspects of in extremis leadership. *Mil Psychol* 22(Sup. 1):89–116
- Giannantonio CM, Hurley-Hanson AE (eds) (2013) *Extreme leadership: leader, teams and situations outside the norm*. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK
- Gibson R, Sipes D (2008) Grief. In: Horn B, Walker RW (eds) *The military leadership handbook*. Canadian Defence Academy Press, Kingston, pp 320–338
- Gray JA (1987) *The psychology of fear and stress*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Haas H, Kernic F (1998) *Zur Soziologie von UN-Peacekeeping-Einsätzen*. Nomos, Baden-Baden
- Haas H, Kernic F, Plaschke A (eds) (2012) *Leadership in challenging situations*. Peter Lang, Frankfurt
- Hancock PA, Szalma JL (eds) (2008) *Performance under stress*. Ashgate Publishers, Aldershot, England
- Hand S (ed) (1989) *The Levinas reader: Emmanuel Levinas*. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford
- Hand S (ed) (1996) *Facing the other: the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas*. Curzon, Richmond
- Hannah S, Uhl-Bien M, Avolio B, Cavarretta F (2009) A framework for examining leadership in extreme contexts. *Leadersh Quart* 20(6):897–919
- Hannah S, Campbell D, Matthews M (2010) Advancing a research agenda for leadership in dangerous contexts. *Mil Psychol* 22(Sup. 1):157–189
- Harmon-Jones E, Simon L, Greenberg J, Pyszczynski T, Solomon S, McGregor H (1997) Terror management theory and self-esteem: evidence that increased self-esteem reduces mortality salience effects. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 72(1):24–36
- Harrington-LaMorie J (2011) Operation Iraqi freedom/operation enduring freedom: exploring wartime death and bereavement. *Soc Work Health Care* 50(7):543–563
- Harrington-LaMorie J, McDevitt-Murphy ME (2011) Traumatic death in the United States military: initiating the dialogue on war-related loss. In: Neimeyer R, Winokuer H, Harris D, Thornton G (eds) *Grief and bereavement in contemporary society: bridging research and practice*. Routledge, New York, pp 261–272
- Heidegger M (1962) *Being and time*. Harper & Row, New York
- Howarth G (2007) *Death and dying: a sociological introduction*. Polity Press, Cambridge
- Jameton A (1993) Dilemmas of moral distress: moral responsibility and nursing practice. *AWHONN's Clin Issues Perinat Women's Health Nurs* 4(4):542–551
- Kastenbaum R (2002) *Macmillan encyclopedia of death and dying*. Macmillan, New York
- Kastenbaum R (2012) *Death, society, and human experience*. Pearson, Boston
- Katz P, Bartone P (1998) Mourning, ritual and recovery after an airline tragedy. *Omega J Death Dying* 36(3):193–200
- Kearl M (1989) *Endings: a sociology of death and dying*. Oxford University Press, Oxford

- Keenan D (1999) Death and responsibility: the “work” of Levinas. State University of New York Press, Albany, NY
- Kernic F (1997) UN-Peacekeeping: Soziologische und sozialpsychologische Aspekte. Reflexionen zu ausgewählten sozialen Prozessen und Verhaltensmustern. Ein fragmentarischer Deutungsversuch. *S+F, Vierteljahresschrift für Sicherheit und Frieden*, 179–185
- Kernic F (2002) Tod und Unendlichkeit. Über das Phänomen des Todes bei Emmanuel Lévinas. Dr. Kovač Verlag, Hamburg
- Kernic F, Haas H (1999) Warriors for peace. A sociological study on the Austrian experience of UN peacekeeping. Peter Lang, Frankfurt/Main
- Kolditz TA (2006) Research in in extremis settings. *Armed Forces Soc* 32(4):655–658
- Kolditz TA (2007) In extremis leadership: leading as if your life depended upon it. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco
- Kümmel G, Leonhard N (2004) Tod, Militär und Gesellschaft. Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des Todes. *Berliner Debatte Initial* 15(5/6):132–144
- Larsson G (2010) Ledarskap under stress. Liber, Malmö
- Levinas E (1969) Totality and infinity: an essay on exteriority. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh
- Levinas E (1978) Otherwise than being or beyond essence. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht
- Levinas E (1985) Ethics and infinity: conversations with Philippe Nemo. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh
- Levinas E (1987) Time and the other. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh
- Levinas E (1998) Of god who comes to mind. Stanford University Press, Stanford
- Levinas E (1999) Alterity and transcendence. Columbia University Press, New York
- Levinas E (2000a) Entre nous: on thinking-of-the-other. Columbia University Press, New York
- Levinas E (2000b) God, death, and time. Stanford University Press, Stanford
- Lewis JG, Espe-Pfeifer P, Blair G (2000) A comparison of death anxiety and denial in death-risk and death-exposure occupations. *Omega J Death Dying* 40(3):421–434
- Lingis A (1987) Collected philosophical papers of Emmanuel Levinas. *Phaenomenologica* 100. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague
- Loo R, Shea L (1996) Structure of the collett-lester fear of death and dying scale. *Death Studies* 20(6):577–586
- Matthews MD (2008) Positive psychology: adaptation, leadership, and performance in exceptional circumstances. In: Hancock PA, Szalma JL (eds) *Performance under stress*. Ashgate, Aldershot, England, pp 163–180
- Mileti DS, Drabek TE, Haas JE (1975) Human systems in extreme environments: a sociological perspective. University of Colorado, Boulder
- Morgan M (2011) The Cambridge introduction to Emmanuel Levinas. Cambridge University Press, New York
- Nilsson S (2011) Civil and military leadership processes in situations of extreme environmental demands. Karlstad University, Karlstad
- Nilsson S (2012) Militära ledares hantering av akuta stressituationer: Med fokus på moraliska dilemman i kombination med ackumulerad stress. Försvarshögskolan, ILS serie, Stockholm
- Nilsson S, Sjöberg M, Kallenberg K, Larsson G (2011) Moral stress in international humanitarian aid and rescue operations: a grounded theory study. *Ethics Behav* 21(1):49–68
- Peperzak AT (1997) Beyond: the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Northwestern University Press, Evanston
- Peperzak AT, Critchley S, Bernasconi R (eds) (1996) Emmanuel Levinas: basic philosophical writings. Indiana University Press, Bloomington
- Proulx G, Fahy RF, Walker A (2004) Analysis of first-person accounts from survivors of the World Trade Centre evacuation on September 11, 2001. National Research Council Canada
- Pyszczyński T, Abdollahi A, Solomon S, Greenberg J, Cohen F, Weise D (2006) Mortality salience, martyrdom, and military might: the great Satan versus the axis of evil. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull* 32(4):525–537

- Robbins J (ed) (2001) *Is it righteous to be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*. Stanford University Press, Stanford
- Rushton CH (2006) Defining and addressing moral distress: tools for critical care nursing leaders. *AACN Adv Crit Care* 17(2):161–168
- Rushton CH, Caldwell M, Kurtz M, Hylton HM (2016) Moral distress: a catalyst in building moral resilience. *Am J Nurs* 116(7):40–49
- Schulz R (1978) *The psychology of death, dying, and bereavement*. Addison-Wesley, Reading
- Seale C (1998) *Constructing death: the sociology of dying and bereavement*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Sjöberg M (2012) *Leadership and stress: indirect military leadership and leadership during complex rescue operations*. Örebro Universitet, Örebro
- Soeters J, Van den Berg CE, Varoğlu AK, Sığrı U (2007) Accepting death in the military: a Turkish-Dutch comparison. *Int J Intercultural Relat* 31(3):299–315
- Solomon S, Greenberg J, Pyszczynski T (1991) A terror management theory of social behavior: the psychological functions of self-esteem and cultural worldviews. *Adv Exp Soc Psychol* 24:93–159
- Sookermany AM, Sand TS, Breivik A (2015) Risk-taking attitudes and behaviors among military personnel in dangerous contexts. A categorized research bibliography. Norwegian School of Sport Sciences Defence Institute, Norwegian Defence University College, Oslo
- Stillion J, Attig T (2015) *Death, dying, and bereavement: contemporary perspectives, institutions, and practices*. Springer, New York
- Sweeney P, Matthews M, Lester PB, Lester P (2011) *Leadership in dangerous situations: a handbook for the armed forces, emergency services, and first responders*. US Naval Institute Press, Annapolis
- Ursano JR, Mccarroll EJ (1990) The nature of a traumatic stressor: handling dead bodies. *J Nerv Ment Dis* 178(6):396–398
- Ursano JR, Fullerton CS, Norwood AE (2003) *Terrorism and disaster. Individual and community mental health interventions*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Van den Berg C, Soeters J (2009) Self-perceptions of soldiers under threat: a field study of the influence of death threat on soldiers. *Mil Psychol* 21(Sup. 2):16–30
- Vinitzky-Seroussi V, Ben Ary E (2000) A knock on the door. Managing death in the Israel Defence Forces. *Sociol Quart* 41(3):391–411
- Widdison HA, Salisbury HG (1990) The delayed stress syndrome: a pathological delayed grief reaction? *Omega J Death Dying* 20(4):293–306
- Wyschogrod E (2000) *Emmanuel Levinas: the problem of ethical metaphysics*. Fordham University Press, New York
- Yammarino F, Mumford M, Connelly M, Dionne S (2010) Leadership and team dynamics for dangerous military contexts. *Mil Psychol* 22:15–41
- Yen C-L, Lin C-Y (2012) The effects of mortality salience on escalation of commitment. *Int J Psychol* 47(1):51–57
- Yukl G (2006) *Leadership in organizations*. Pearson, Upper Saddle River
- Zentrum Innere F (ed) (1996) *Umgang mit Verwundung und Tod im Einsatz*. Deutsche Bundeswehr, Zentrum Innere Führung, Koblenz

Author Biography



Franz Kernic is head of leadership and communication studies at the Military Academy at ETH Zurich. He is also professor of sociology at the Swedish Defense University in Stockholm (on leave) and a senior research fellow at the Austrian National Defense Academy in Vienna (on leave). He received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Vienna, his habilitation (post-doctoral qualification) in political science from the University of Innsbruck and in sociology from the University of the German Armed Forces in Munich. His main fields of interest include leadership and communication, security policy, military sociology as well as peace and conflict research.

Leadership in Extreme Situations

Holenweger, M.O.; Jager, M.K.; Kernic, F. (Eds.)

2017, XII, 390 p. 12 illus., 5 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-55058-9