

Generation Z in the Czech Armed Forces: Leadership Challenges and Opportunities in the Context of Contemporary National Defence

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Abstract

The capacity of military organisations to sustain operational effectiveness depends increasingly on their ability to lead and retain Generation Z personnel (born 1996 – 2012) – the first fully digital cohort entering professional armed forces worldwide. This narrative literature review synthesises evidence on the leadership challenges and opportunities associated with Generation Z, with particular focus on the Czech Armed Forces (CAF). Drawing on generational theory, transformational and adaptive leadership models, as well as empirical military research (2019 – 2025), the paper identifies three analytical dimensions: generational characteristics in military contexts, leadership and development requirements, and institutional adaptation within the CAF. Evidence-based implications are developed for leadership doctrine, training design, and organisational culture.

KEY WORDS: *Generation Z; military leadership; Czech Armed Forces; narrative literature review; transformational leadership; national defence*

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1. Introduction

The capacity of military organisations to recruit, develop, and retain qualified personnel constitutes a prerequisite for their ability to provide national defence. In the contemporary geopolitical environment – characterised by the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine, intensified NATO commitments, renewed emphasis on collective deterrence, and the growing militarisation of the information space – this capacity has acquired new strategic urgency [15]. Professional armed forces across the Euro-Atlantic area simultaneously face a structural challenge: the cohort from which they must now recruit – Generation Z, born approximately between 1996 and 2012 – differs substantially from preceding generations in its values, motivational structures, communication expectations, and relationship to institutional authority [22].

The imperative to adapt military organisations to the characteristics of Generation Z extends beyond human resource management into the domain of strategic competition. Three interconnected dynamics elevate this challenge from an administrative concern to a strategic priority.

First, the competencies in which Generation Z demonstrably excels – digital literacy, rapid information processing, visual communication, adaptive problem-solving in ambiguous environments – map closely onto the capability requirements of contemporary military competition [21]. Hybrid warfare, multi-domain operations, information operations, cyber conflict, and human-machine teaming all demand precisely those cognitive and technical competencies that characterise the developmental profile of Generation Z [22,4]. Conversely, military organisations that fail to effectively integrate Generation Z personnel risk to have capability gaps in domains increasingly central to national security competition. The strategic question is not whether armed forces can afford to adapt to Generation Z, but whether they can afford not to. In the context of the Czech Armed Forces (CAF), this challenge is directly quantifiable. The Army's strategic objective of reaching 30,000 professional soldiers by 2030 assumes sustained and effective recruitment from a generational cohort whose primary socialisation occurred exclusively in the digital environment and whose formative experiences include the COVID-19 pandemic, climate anxiety, and the destabilisation of the post-Cold War security order [2]. The CAF has begun to address

the challenge institutionally – most visibly through a specialised expert event ‘Generation Z in the CAF’ held in January 2025 [20] – yet a theoretically grounded, evidence-based synthesis of available knowledge has until now been absent from Czech military academic literature.

Second, NATO interoperability – the cornerstone of Czech and broader European security architecture – creates convergent adaptation pressures across allied militaries [17]. As documented in this review, United States of America (US), German, Polish, and the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) armed forces are undergoing parallel Generation Z adaptation initiatives [23,4,10]. To the extent that these initiatives successfully transform force structures, doctrines, and organisational cultures of allied partners while the CAF still maintains traditional approaches, the interoperability risks emerge: not only in terms of technical incompatibilities, but also in cultural and operational misalignments between Czech units and their NATO counterparts.

Third, military organisations do not compete for Generation Z talent in isolation, but within a broader geopolitical context in which adversaries and competitors face similar challenges. Strategic advantage will not be gained by armies that avoid generational adaptation – which is, in any case, impossible given demographic inevitability – but by those that adapt most effectively and rapidly to it.

This paper addresses the identified gap and has two main aims: firstly, to provide a systematic synthesis of international and Czech-specific evidence on the generational characteristics of Generation Z as they manifest in military contexts; and secondly, to derive analytically grounded implications for military leadership, training design, and organisational adaptation within the CAF.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical background of this paper merges four distinct yet complementary bodies of knowledge: generational theory, research on Generation Z, military leadership theory, and organisational psychology.

2.1 Generational Theory

The concept of a social generation, according to Karl Mannheim [11], refers not only to demographic cohorts defined by birth year, but also to groups sharing a common ‘social location’ characterised by exposure to formative historical events during periods of developmental sensitivity. Mannheim’s framework [11] emphasises that generational identity is not biologically determined but socially constructed through shared experience. This is essential, as the subsequent literature repeatedly warns against overgeneralising generational archetypes. Rudolph et al. [19] empirically demonstrate that within-cohort variability in values and behaviours substantially exceeds between-cohort variability, and that popular discourse on generational differences frequently lacks rigorous evidence. This paper therefore treats generational characteristics more as probabilistic tendencies and contextual patterns rather than universal traits.

2.2 Research on Generation Z

Within the methodological caution of Rudolph et al. [19], the empirical literature identifies a distinct generational profile for people born approximately between 1996 and 2012 (see the subsequent references). Seemiller and Grace [22] characterise Generation Z as the first fully post-digital generation: unlike Millennials (born 1981 – 1995), who experienced the internet as an innovation, Generation Z has no pre-digital biographical reference point. Generation Z demonstrates a strong purpose orientation – a desire for work that is meaningful and socially consequential – alongside with high expectations of transparency, rapid feedback, and individualised recognition. Twenge’s longitudinal research [24] highlights elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and vulnerability compared to preceding generations, attributes that she connects to the mediating effects of smartphone-based interaction on adolescent development. Simultaneously, Generation Z exhibits strong pragmatism, digital literacy, and entrepreneurial orientation, alongside with substantially lower respect to institutional hierarchy than its predecessors.

2.3 Military Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory, developed by Bass and Riggio [3], serves as primary leadership theoretical framework for our paper. Transformational leadership – characterised by idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration – has consistently demonstrated superior outcomes in complex, high-stakes organisational environments. The adaptive leadership framework of Heifetz and Linsky [7], which distinguishes between ‘technical’ problems (solvable through existing expertise) and ‘adaptive’ challenges (requiring new values, beliefs, and behaviours), is also relevant: effective integration of Generation Z cohorts into military organisations constitutes an adaptive challenge exactly in this sense. US Army doctrine codified in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22 in year 2019 [25] provides an institutional-doctrinal reference point, articulating the Army’s leadership model through ‘be, know, do’

dimensions and emphasising mission command and the empowerment of subordinate commanders. An analogous doctrinal framework within the conditions of the Czech Armed Forces is represented by the Doctrine of the Army of the Czech Republic [16], which likewise emphasizes mission command and the development of professionalism within the officer corps.

2.4 Organisational Psychology

Two concepts from organisational psychology are particularly relevant to our analysis. Amy Edmondson's concept of psychological safety [5] – the shared belief that a team is a safe environment for interpersonal risk-taking – has been demonstrated as a critical precondition for learning, innovation, and performance in high-uncertainty environments. Its relevance for military organisations navigating generational change is note-worthy: the documented Generation Z sensitivity to authentic relationships and fear of public failure suggests that psychological safety is not only a developmental preference but a performance-relevant variable. The Maslach et al. burnout framework [13] – characterising burnout along the dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy – provides additional analytical support for the retention challenge, as burnout risk increases when individual needs for meaning, autonomy, and community are structurally frustrated.

3. Methodology

This paper employs a narrative literature review methodology. Unlike systematic reviews, which seek exhaustive coverage through pre-specified search protocols and quantitative synthesis, narrative reviews are appropriate when the goal is theoretical integration across heterogeneous bodies of knowledge – particularly when the relevant literature spans across multiple disciplines and encompasses both empirical studies and institutional documents [11], which is, with papers from the domains of sociology, psychology, military science or organisational behaviour, the case of this study.

The sources analysed in this study were identified through systematic searches of academic databases (Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Defence Technical Information Center), using the terms 'Generation Z', 'military leadership', 'armed forces recruitment', 'transformational leadership military', and their Czech equivalents. Institutional publications of the Czech Ministry of Defence, the CAF, RAND Corporation, and the University of Defence were also reviewed. The main criteria for a study to be included constituted the relevance to a military or security context, methodological transparency, and publication between 2019 and 2025. Selected basic theoretical works were added into the sample regardless of their date of publication. A total of 26 sources has been integrated. The primary limitation of the narrative approach – potential selection bias in source inclusion – is acknowledged; findings should be interpreted as a theoretically informed synthesis rather than a statistical meta-analysis.

4. Generation Z in Military Contexts

4.1 Generational Profile and Military Relevance

The profile of Generation Z represents a specific configuration of strengths and vulnerabilities for military organisations. The strengths which are most consistently documented in the literature include: high digital and technological competence; strong situational awareness developed through continuous information exposure; purpose-oriented motivation and a desire for work with clear social relevance; orientation on collaboration and team problem-solving; as well as cognitive flexibility associated with navigating in rapidly changing information environments [22,8].

In contrast to these strengths, the literature identifies a cluster of characteristics that present challenges for military integration. Generation Z soldiers demonstrate substantially lower inclination toward long-term institutional commitment than preceding cohorts, with career planning horizons typically measured in months rather than years [22,23]. Tolerance for institutional hierarchy and unconditional respect to authority is substantially reduced; Generation Z expects justification for directives and perceives unexplained orders as indicators of poor leadership rather than legitimate authority. Resilience under prolonged adversity – particularly in contexts of extended isolation, physical discomfort, and information deprivation – appears lower than in previous generations, a finding Twenge [24] connects to the mitigating effects of digital comfort environments on adolescent stress inoculation. King [8] specifically identifies resilience as the primary leadership challenge in managing Generation Z members in the military environment, noting that generic resilience programmes produce limited results and that individualised, relationship-based approaches are significantly more effective.

The generational profile of Generation Z becomes analytically clearer when compared with the two immediately preceding cohorts that have constituted most military personnel over the past three decades. Table 1 synthesises documented generational characteristics across dimensions relevant to military organisational contexts, drawing on longitudinal generational research [22,24] and militarily specific comparative studies [23,4].

Table 1: Comparative characteristics of three generational cohorts in contexts relevant for military organisations

Dimension	Generation X (1965 – 1980)	Millennials (1981 – 1995)	Generation Z (1996 – 2012)
Digital competence	Analogue generation, adapted to digitalisation	High digital proficiency, internet emerged in adolescence	Fully digital generation, intuitive use of technology
Communication style	Direct, formal communication	Blend of personal and digital communication	Fast, visual, multimodal communication (emoji, video, image formats)
Work/service motivation	Stability, security, loyalty	Meaning + growth + work-life balance	Strong purpose on orientation, immediate relevance, value alignment with organisation
Relationship to authority	Respect for hierarchy	Partnership approach, need for explanation	Conditional authority, demand for transparency and dialogue
Learning and education	Linear and text-based formats	Interactive approach, digitally supported learning	Preference for scenario-based, practical, digital, interactive learning; rapid feedback
Resilience / stress management	Strong stress tolerance, experience with offline adolescence	Adequate resilience, developed coping strategies	Lower tolerance for prolonged discomfort; higher psychosocial sensitivity; impact of digital comfort zones
Career horizon	Long-term service, linear career	Flexible career paths	Short career planning, pragmatism, low institutional loyalty
Retention in military environment	Stable retention	Slightly declining retention	Retention depends on relationships, meaning, leadership quality, and psychological safety; tendency toward early departure

Based on Seemiller & Grace [22], Twenge [24], Stanley [23], Dascalu et al. [4]

4.2 Motivation and Retention: International Evidence

Stanley’s doctoral research [23] on Generation Z retention in the US Army identifies sense of belonging, quality of relationships with direct supervisors, and perceived purposefulness of service as the primary predictors of long-term commitment – outweighing financial compensation, career advancement, and technical education opportunities. This finding is consistent with Dascalu et al. (RAND Corporation) research on Generation Z and joint professional military education [4], which documents a significant mismatch between the educational formats currently used in professional military education (PME) and the learning preferences of Generation Z officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs). They demonstrate a strong preference for scenario-based, experiential, and digitally mediated learning over the traditional lecture format [4]. Mastromauro’s analysis [14] focused on US Marine Corps leadership has identified an emerging ‘leadership gap’ – a structural misalignment between the directive, experience-based leadership culture of senior officers and the participatory, feedback-intensive expectations of Generation Z Marines – and argues that this gap, if unaddressed, represents a significant retention risk.

4.3 The Czech Context

Czech-specific empirical evidence on Generation Z in the CAF is limited but growing. Všečeková [26] examines the motivational structures of young Czechs considering military service and identifies professional identity formation, financial security, and leadership quality as primary motivators, while bureaucratic culture, limited personal autonomy, and the competitive attractiveness of the civilian labour market – particularly in the technology and service sectors – represent the main barriers. Kroča [10] validates these findings and additionally documents a communication gap between the predominantly traditional recruitment messaging of the CAF and the value-oriented, narrative-driven communication preferences of Generation Z candidates. The CAF’s strategic response [2] has already included diversified social media engagement, influencer-mediated outreach, and streamlined recruitment procedures – adaptations publicly endorsed by

General Řehka, the Chief of the General Staff, through his 2024 statement that Generation Z “is not lazier or worse – it is simply different, and we are managing to work with it” [20].

5. Leadership Challenges and Adaptations

This comparative framework reveals that the transition of army forces from Millennials to Generation Z represents not only an incremental adjustment, but a qualitative shift in several dimensions: most strikingly in career planning horizons (reduction of 60 – 75%), stress resilience architecture (from team-based to requiring structural support), and relationship to authority (from negotiation to conditionality). These shifts have direct implications for recruitment messaging, training design, and retention strategy, as further addressed in Section 6.

5.1 Limits of Traditional Military Leadership Models

Traditional military leadership has historically been grounded in transactional assumptions: compliance with authority in exchange for rank, pay, and career advancement, based on a culture of hierarchical discipline and the formation of collective identity through shared hardship. This model proved being robust across multiple generational transitions – from the from the oldest post-war cohorts to Millennials (born 1981 – 1995): each preceding cohort, even if socialised in the civilian environment, shared a fundamental willingness to subordinate individual preferences to institutional norms upon entering military service [18]. The evidence reviewed in this paper suggests that this dynamic may be qualitatively different for Generation Z. The literature (like [22,23,24]) does not suggest that Generation Z soldiers are less capable or less motivated, but rather that they are motivated by a different configuration of factors – purpose, transparency, belonging, and individualised recognition – and that compliance without understanding or relational investment produces disengagement at a substantially lower tolerance level than in earlier cohorts [22,23].

5.2 Transformational Leadership as an Evidence-Supported Model

The convergence of evidence across multiple studies like [3,18,22] consistently points to transformational leadership as the model which is best aligned with the motivational profile of Generation Z [3,18,25]. Transformational leaders engage followers through four mechanisms: a) idealised influence (embodying values that followers aspire to emulate); b) inspirational motivation (articulating a compelling and purposeful vision); c) intellectual stimulation (challenging followers to think critically and innovate); and d) individualised consideration (attending to the developmental needs and aspirations of everyone). Each of these mechanisms directly addresses a Generation Z preference which has been already documented. The inspirational motivation dimension addresses the purpose orientation; individualised consideration addresses the demand for personalised recognition and support; intellectual stimulation addresses the preference for challenge and agency; and idealised influence provides authentically relational foundation that requires Generation Z’s trust architecture [3]. King [8] specifically demonstrates that resilience outcomes for Generation Z members in military environments are substantially better under leaders oriented to transformation than under transactionally oriented ones.

5.3 Adaptive Leadership in the Context of Institutional Change

The adaptive leadership framework of Heifetz and Linsky [7] offers an important complement to transformational theory. While transformational leadership addresses the relational and motivational dimensions of leading Generation Z individuals, adaptive leadership addresses the organisational challenge at the institutional level. Integrating Generation Z into military culture requires not only the adoption of new managerial techniques, but also the examination and revision of deeply embedded assumptions about authority, obedience, communication, and career development. This presents a challenge in the technical sense of the term: it cannot be resolved solely through the application of existing expertise, but it requires also the organisation – its senior leadership, its educational institutions, its doctrine developers – to engage in genuine processes of value adaptation. As demonstrated by a comparative analysis of military innovation [1], the ability of an armed force to transform deeply ingrained cultural patterns of command is a key predictor of its long-term adaptive capacity. The US Army’s revision of ADP 6-22 [25] with its emphasis on mission command, the German Bundeswehr’s ‘Innere Führung’ framework with its emphasis on the soldier as ‘Staatsbürger in Uniform’ (citizen in uniform), and NATO’s broader emphasis on multinational, decentralised command represent concrete institutional responses to the same underlying adaptive challenge.

5.4 Psychological Safety and Retention

Edmondson’s psychological safety framework [5] is especially pertinent for understanding both performance and retention among Generation Z personnel in the military environment. Psychological safety – defined as the shared belief that the social environment is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, including expressing doubts, admitting errors, and questioning accepted assumptions – is not a condition of comfort but a condition of learning. In organisations characterised by high operational uncertainty and constant demands for adaptation, like army, psychological safety is a performance asset rather than a luxury. The Generation Z sensitivity to authentic relationships, its reduced tolerance for public humiliation as a

developmental tool, and its elevated mental health vulnerability [24,13] suggest that military units and training environments characterised by a psychologically safe climate will demonstrate superior performance and retention outcomes. The Maslach et al. burnout framework [13] further indicates that the structural frustration of Generation Z's needs for meaning, autonomy, and community – which traditional military environments may inadvertently produce – represents a primary driver of onboarding failure.

5.5 Documented Adaptation in Allied Militaries

While systematic empirical evaluation of Generation Z-focused military adaptation initiatives remains limited, documented cases from allied militaries provide evidence regarding the feasibility and outcomes of substantive organisational change. US, German, and Polish armed forces have already implemented multi-component adaptations to basic training and professional military education informed by Generation Z research [23,4,10,14], like:

- the introduction of scenario-based and problem-oriented learning modules into the early phases of training (based on recommendations by Dascalu et al. – RAND Corporation) [4];
- a stronger emphasis on mentoring and relational roles of instructors, complementing traditional instructional positions (documented in the US Army and US Marine Corps) [23,14];
- the modernisation of communication and recruitment practices, reflected in the growing use of digital platforms, social media, and value-oriented messaging (as observed in analyses of recruitment across Central Europe, including the Czech Republic) [10].

This evidence suggests three critical insights: first, adaptation to Generation Z preferences is feasible in military training contexts without compromising operational readiness. Second, successful implementation requires simultaneous attention to procedural change and cultural transformation. Third, NCO-level buy-in is critical and cannot be assumed but must be deliberately cultivated through professional development and command emphasis. Common adaptation patterns in the armies mentioned above include the integration of mentorship-focused roles alongside traditional instructor positions, restructuring to incorporate scenario-based exercises earlier in training cycles, implementation of structured developmental feedback mechanisms, and increased transparency regarding performance expectations and progression pathways.

6. Implications for the Czech Armed Forces

The evidence synthesised in the preceding sections suggests several scholarly and analytically grounded implications for the continuous adaptation of the CAF. These are hence presented not as prescriptive recommendations, but as evidence-based hypotheses for both institutional reflection and further empirical investigation.

6.1 Reframing the Value Proposition of Military Service

The literature consistently indicates that Generation Z's motivation for military service is dependent on the perceived purposefulness and self-actualization potential of service itself, rather than solely its financial or status rewards [22,23,26]. This suggests that CAF communication strategies would benefit from a shift in emphasis: from transactional framing (pay, benefits, career security) toward narrative framing that situates military service within a coherent image of national defence, professional identity development, and the acquisition of competencies transferable across military, professional, and personal contexts. Czech empirical data [26,10] support the hypothesis that such reframing would enhance the relevance and attractiveness of military service for Generation Z candidates. Social media and influencer-mediated engagement strategies already deployed by the CAF [20] seems like a starting point, yet the evidence suggests that communication framing and the substantive value proposition are equally important.

6.2 Modernising Training and Education Design

Dascalu et al. (RAND Corporation) findings [4] on Generation Z and on professional military education suggest that the dominant paradigm of lecture-based, passive instruction is substantially misaligned with the learning preferences and cognitive styles of Generation Z officers and NCOs. The evidence supports reorientation toward scenario-based, problem-centred, and digitally mediated learning environments in which participants exercise genuine agency and receive rapid, individualised feedback. This is consistent with the broader literature on transformational leadership development [3,18] and with the psychological safety framework [5], which identifies participatory, low-judgement learning environments as precursors of deeper knowledge integration. The University of Defence in Brno, the primary institution for officer education in the Czech Republic, occupies a structurally critical position in this regard.

6.3 Leadership Competency Development for Generationally Diverse Forces

The reviewed evidence suggests that the leadership competencies most relevant for effectively leading Generation Z personnel – individualised consideration, authentic relational investment, transparent communication of purpose, tolerance for questioning and inquiry, and the creation of psychologically safe unit climates – are not uniformly distributed across the

current CAF officer and NCO corps. This is not a failure of character, but a “natural” consequence of the leadership culture in which current senior leaders were themselves developed: they have most probably emphasised directive authority over relational investment. The implication for what is that leadership development programmes at all levels should give explicit attention to these competencies alongside the established military virtues of discipline, decisiveness, and professional competence. Marek and Tesař [12] document the CAF's existing emphasis on shared and adaptive leadership as a conceptual platform; evidence from this review suggests that this platform requires concrete methodological development toward transformational and adaptive approaches in line with the Czech Armed Forces' doctrinal commitment to professionalism and mission command adaptability [16].

6.4 Systematic Application of International Evidence

The CAF does not navigate this challenge in isolation. Allied militaries – particularly the United States [23,4,14], Germany, Poland, and the Benelux states – have already accumulated substantial practical experience with the integration of Generation Z cohorts into the military institutional environment and they have already produced institutionally documented evidence of best practices, i.e. on what works. The evidence suggests that the CAF would benefit from systematic and structured engagement with this international evidence base through NATO-level knowledge exchange mechanisms, bilateral academic and doctrinal collaboration, and participation in multinational research initiatives. Contextual adaptation of international findings to the specific cultural, historical, and institutional context of the Czech armed forces would naturally be required; the value lies not in the direct transfer of solutions, but in accelerating learning through evidence-informed institutional dialogue.

6.5 Framework for Institutional Self-Assessment

The evidence synthesised in this review suggests that effective institutional adaptation to Generation Z members requires systematic assessment of organisational readiness across multiple dimensions. Drawing on the change management literature [22], military transformation case studies [23], as well as other relevant literature (mainly [2], [6], [8], [9], [10], [13], [14], [17] and [21]), we propose a diagnostic framework structured around five critical domains. This framework is not intended as a prescriptive checklist, but as a heuristic tool supporting structured institutional reflection and priority identification:

- Domain 1:** Leadership Framework and Leader Education. To what extent existing doctrinal documents, officer and NCO education curricula, and promotion criteria support the development of transformational and adaptive leadership competencies?
- Domain 2:** Training and Education Design. What proportion of undertaken training employs active, scenario-based, and problem-oriented pedagogical approaches as opposed to traditional lecture formats?
- Domain 3:** Organisational Communication Culture. How transparent are career pathways, decision-making processes, and communication procedures at different levels of command?
- Domain 4:** Psychological Safety Climate. To what extent do units create an environment that enables interpersonal risk-taking, open communication, and learning without fear of sanction?
- Domain 5:** Technology Integration. How effectively does the organisation leverage digital tools, simulation technologies, and data-supported practices in training, education, and management?

This framework should, therefore, serve as a starting point for structured institutional dialogue, not as a comprehensive evaluation instrument. The essential insight is that adaptation to Generation Z is not a one-dimensional intervention, but a multidimensional organisational challenge requiring coordinated effort across interconnected systems.

7. Conclusions

This narrative literature review synthesised evidence from 26 international and Czech-specific sources concerning the leadership challenges and opportunities that Generation Z presents for military organisations, with particular focus on the Czech Armed Forces. The analysis demonstrates that the generational profile of Generation Z – characterised by digital literacy, orientation on purpose in service, lower institutional respect, and heightened psychosocial vulnerability – creates qualitatively distinct demands on military leadership. The profile of Generation Z candidates is also associated with higher burnout risk, which the literature connects particularly to deficits in meaning, autonomy, and social support in the work environment. This is not a question of reduced capability, but of a different configuration of motivational and relational needs than those for which traditional military leadership models were designed.

The convergence of evidence from transformational leadership, adaptive leadership, and organisational psychology clearly supports an approach that combines relational investment, transparent communication of purpose, individualised development, psychologically safe environment, and participatory forms of education. These approaches are not in tension with military discipline or operational effectiveness; on the contrary, international evidence demonstrates that they can

represent effective means of strengthening engagement, performance, and retention of Generation Z members while simultaneously reducing their susceptibility to burnout.

The CAF's ongoing adaptation – undertaken mainly in the terms of modernisation of recruitment communication and growing institutional attention to the specificities of Generation Z – represents a promising foundation. Available evidence nevertheless suggests that long-term sustainable adaptation will require deeper engagement at the level of doctrinal leadership frameworks, more systematic development of officers and NCOs, and modernisation of military education design. The most significant gap in Czech research thus remains the absence of a large-scale empirical study examining the motivations, leadership perceptions, learning preferences, and burnout risk factors of Generation Z soldiers already serving in the CAF – and this is the path that we will follow in our next research.

Analytical rigour also requires acknowledging the risks accompanying organisational change of this nature. These include surface adaptation – whereby only procedural modifications occur without deeper cultural change, potentially generating disillusionment and cynicism – over-adaptation threatening core military functions, intergenerational tensions between traditionally socialised commanders and Generation Z members, and competition from the civilian labour market seeking the same talent. If military organisations adapt more slowly than civilian employers, they risk losing their attractiveness in the competition for Generation Z personnel. These risks underscore that effective adaptation to Generation Z is not a one-dimensional intervention, but a complex, culturally conditioned, and multidimensional change requiring authentic institutional transformation, the ability to distinguish necessary functions from historical habits, managed engagement with intergenerational dynamics, and sufficiently rapid implementation to maintain the competitiveness of the armed forces.

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