

UDC 351.86:355:331.108(477)



M. Puzyrov



I. Morozov

## THEORETICAL BASIS FOR IMPROVING THE CAREER GROWTH OF MILITARY PERSONNEL OF THE SECURITY AND DEFENCE FORCES OF UKRAINE

*The article provides a theoretical analysis of the problem of improving the career growth of military personnel of the security and defence forces of Ukraine under the conditions of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and the legal regime of martial law. Career growth is considered as a systemic process of professional, managerial, and personal development that directly affects institutional resilience and the state's capacity to ensure national and state security. The role of professional development, military education, and military leadership is substantiated as key factors in shaping effective career trajectories. Emphasis is placed on the need to move from fragmented personnel decisions to a comprehensive theoretical and methodological model for managing the career growth of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine.*

**Keywords:** career growth, state security, military personnel, security and defence forces, armed aggression, professional development, military leadership, military education.

**Statement of the problem.** The current stage of development of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine is characterised by a significant complication of the security environment [1], caused by the prolonged armed aggression of the Russian Federation, the introduction of the legal regime of martial law [2, 3], and the need to simultaneously perform tasks related to repelling the enemy, ensuring public safety and public order, as well as transforming the security and defence sector [4, 5] in accordance with Euro-Atlantic standards [6]. Under these conditions, the human factor acquires particular importance as one of the key resources of institutional resilience and the effectiveness of military formations and law enforcement agencies.

The career growth of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine acts not only as an element of personnel policy but also as an important tool for motivation, professional development, and retention (preventing the so-called staff turnover) of qualified personnel in the relevant formations (bodies, units). At the same time, the practice of functioning of the institutions under study indicates the presence of a number of problems associated with fragmented approaches to career management, the dominance of formal criteria for promotion, insufficient transparency of procedures, and limited consideration of contemporary challenges caused by the martial law regime.

In view of this, there is a need for scientific understanding of the theoretical foundations for improving the career growth of military personnel of the security and defence forces of Ukraine as a component of ensuring state security [7].

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The issue of career growth of personnel within the components of the security and defence sector of Ukraine has attracted the attention of domestic scholars in the context of reforming the system of state and national security, improving personnel policy, and developing military and law enforcement education. Certain aspects of professional development and career growth, personnel management, and human resources policy have been examined in the works of S. V. Bielai, O. P. Verbovenko, A. F. Holovnia, V. V. Yemanov, V. A. Kyrlyenko, A. V. Lytvyn, S. T. Poltorak, Ye. O. Romanenko, V. M. Telelym, O. M. Tohochynskyi, V. I. Trobiuk, and other scholars.

The research of these scholars substantiates the need to develop a systematic approach to the career growth of military personnel, combining professional training with competency assessment, as well as introducing the principles of meritocracy and equal access to promotion. At the same time, an analysis of academic sources indicates that most of these works are applied or sector-specific in nature and do not provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for improving the career growth of military personnel of the Security and Defence

Forces of Ukraine under conditions of armed aggression and martial law.

**The purpose of the article** is to substantiate the theoretical foundations for improving the career growth of military personnel of the security and defence forces of Ukraine in the context of modern security challenges.

**Summary of the main material.** In theoretical terms, the career growth of military personnel of the security and defence forces of Ukraine is considered as a multidimensional socio-legal and managerial phenomenon that is closely interrelated with the functioning of the components of the security and defence sector. An analysis of contemporary works on the theory of state and national security [8, 9, 10] confirms that human potential is one of the main resources for ensuring the stability of the state, along with military-technical, economic and information components.

In particular, the studies by S. V. Bielai and I. O. Buriak [11] substantiate that the obsolescence of the career growth system, the absence of clear algorithms, and the lack of position profiles for military posts negatively affect the professional development of servicemen of the National Guard of Ukraine. Developing this approach, it should be noted that these problems are characteristic not only of the National Guard of Ukraine but also of other components of the Security and Defence Forces, which determines the need for a broader theoretical understanding of career growth as an element of state personnel policy under conditions of martial law.

In this context, career growth performs the function of reproducing professionally trained and managerially capable personnel who are able to operate under conditions of uncertainty, increased risks, and crisis pressures. From the standpoint of a systems approach, it acts as an instrument of strategic human resource management that ensures continuity of managerial decisions and the development of professional competencies, as well as the command and leadership qualities of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine.

Career growth acquires particular significance under conditions of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation, when the effectiveness of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine largely depends on the ability of military personnel to promptly form managerial (command) structures, make use of combat experience, and ensure the motivation of personnel to continue military service [12, 13]. Under such circumstances, the career growth of a serviceman ceases to be a purely individual trajectory of professional development and is transformed into a factor of ensuring national resilience.

Therefore, the career growth of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine in contemporary conditions should be considered as a systemic process of professional, managerial, and personal development that directly affects the state's capacity to ensure national and state security. Unlike the traditional approach, in which a career is identified exclusively with advancement along the official hierarchical ladder, modern scientific thought interprets it as a dynamic trajectory of acquiring competencies, experience, and leadership potential necessary for performing tasks in the security and defence sphere.

Research [11] also emphasizes that professional training is an integral criterion for the career growth of military personnel, and education is its basic component. Developing this position, it is worth emphasizing that in the current conditions of the functioning of Ukraine's security and defence forces, professional training should go beyond narrowly specialized knowledge and cover the formation of managerial, communicative, psychological and leadership competencies. It is these qualities that determine the ability of military personnel to act effectively in conditions of uncertainty, rapid change and a high level of responsibility, determined by the specifics of performing combat tasks.

The study of the theoretical foundations for improving the career growth of military personnel has also shown that professional development within the Security and Defence Forces should be regarded as a long-term process of accumulating human capital that continues throughout the entire period of service. Unlike training aimed at the short-term elimination of knowledge gaps, professional development is strategic in nature and focuses on preparing servicemen to perform future functions and tasks. In this context, the integration of the military education system with career growth mechanisms becomes particularly important, which corresponds to NATO standards in the field of Professional Military Education.

This research has demonstrated that Professional Military Education is an established term within NATO standards used to denote the system of military education and training of military professionals in the member states of the North Atlantic Alliance. Within this framework, a hierarchical vertical of educational programmes (the so-called L-courses) has been developed, which functions in NATO military educational institutions and in the national education systems of the Alliance's member states. This model is based on the principles of gradualism, continuity of training, and a close connection between the educational process and the career development of military personnel [14, 15, 16].

Taking this experience into account, Ukraine has introduced an updated algorithm for obtaining military education, aimed at ensuring the continuity of educational levels and their integration with the system of career growth of military personnel. In particular, as follows from the analysis of the Concept for the Transformation of the Military Education System [17], military education may be obtained in parallel with specialised secondary, vocational (vocational-technical), professional pre-higher or higher education, which allows it to be classified as formal education. This form of education provides for the achievement by learners of learning outcomes defined by state standards at the corresponding level and the acquisition of qualifications that are recognised by the state and used in the process of service and professional advancement (career growth).

It should be noted that the concept of “Professional Military Education” is normative in nature. Thus, it is repeatedly mentioned in the Concept for the Transformation of the Military Education System [17], including in reference to NATO standards in the relevant field, and is defined as “specialised military-oriented education obtained through educational programmes at the appropriate levels of military education with the aim of improving the professional level of a military specialist and acquiring professional competencies that ensure the performance of service (combat) functions” [17].

According to the well-grounded view of V. Karpenko, “professional military education should develop in servicemen not only the necessary knowledge, skills, competencies, and value orientations for the successful performance of service duties under various conditions, but also value orientations, patriotic feelings, moral and ethical qualities, as well as physical and psychological readiness to defend the Motherland. Professional military education at all levels of training should also provide for the continuous development and professional improvement of military personnel, their adaptation to changing conditions and challenges, and leadership competence, taking into account specialisation and the level of command” (Karpenko, 2023, pp. 91-92).

Therefore, an important conceptual element of career growth is leadership (military leadership), which in contemporary scholarly sources [11, 19, 20] is substantiated as one of the key factors of the professional development of military personnel. Summarizing and developing this approach, it can be argued that leadership should be regarded as a universal competence for all categories of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine. It includes the ability to set goals, motivate subordinates, maintain discipline, ensure unit cohesion, and assume responsibility for the decisions made.

The purpose of military leadership at any level of command is to ensure the professional and responsible performance by military personnel of their official duties and assigned tasks in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine and the norms of international law. In this context, military leadership functions as an integrative managerial quality that combines professional, moral-psychological, and socio-communicative characteristics necessary for effective command and control of personnel.

Below is a generalised description of the essential elements of military leadership, its core nature, and the leadership qualities of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine.

1. The key components of the leadership qualities of a military leader (commander) include the ability to formulate tactical, operational, and strategic objectives, determine optimal ways to achieve them, ensure high-quality task execution, deeply understand the specifics of subordinates’ activities, and apply effective mechanisms of internal communication. An important element of military leadership is the promotion of team building, integrative development, and cohesion of personnel.

2. An important component of military leadership is the establishment of servicemen’s commitment to national traditions of the warrior ethos, as well as ensuring personal and collective compliance with international principles and standards of military leadership. In this aspect, the leader acts as a bearer of the values and norms of professional military culture.

3. A military leader must be capable of creating a positive moral and psychological climate within a unit, exerting effective managerial and motivational influence on personnel, providing timely information about the situation, forecasting the development of events and inspiring subordinates by personal example to make decisions and take active action during the preparation and execution of assigned tasks.

4. The characteristics of effective military leadership also include the ability to ensure cohesion and coordinated actions of personnel, to know the individual characteristics of subordinates perfectly, to be able to listen to them, to respond promptly to their needs and to provide the necessary assistance. Equally important is the leader’s readiness to share all hardships and risks of service with subordinates, to fairly reward the best servicemembers, and to apply appropriate disciplinary measures in cases of violations of military discipline and legality.

5. An integral feature of military leadership is constant work on one’s own professional development and

the development of personnel, the ability to effectively manage conflicts, prevent their occurrence and resolve them constructively when they arise. Of particular importance is adherence to the principles of social justice, equal rights and opportunities for women and men, as well as compliance with the requirements of governing documents on the prevention of discrimination, countering sexual harassment, etc.

6. A military leader must demonstrate self-confidence, respect for subordinates, the ability to acknowledge personal mistakes, assume responsibility for decisions made, and be prepared to bear personal responsibility for the consequences of managerial activity, particularly under conditions of increased risk and a complex operational environment.

Having provided a brief description of the essential characteristics of leadership among military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine, it should be added that, taking into account the doctrinal documents of the Armed Forces of Ukraine [21] and the National Guard of Ukraine [22], military leadership acquires the significance of an institutional resource that ensures effective command and control in both combat and routine conditions. Accordingly, the development of leadership qualities should be integrated into the system of military education, professional training, and the assessment of the career potential of military personnel.

Thus, summarizing and developing modern scientific and doctrinal provisions, it can be concluded that improving the career growth of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine requires a transition from fragmented managerial decisions to a comprehensive theoretical and methodological model that combines regulatory and legal frameworks, the system of military education, professional development and leadership as key factors in ensuring state security.

### **Conclusions**

Thus, based on the substantiation of the theoretical foundations for improving the career growth of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine, the following conclusions have been drawn.

1. The career growth of military personnel of the security and defence forces of Ukraine in the current conditions should be considered as a systematic process of professional, managerial and personal development, which directly affects the state's ability to ensure national and state security. Unlike the traditional approach, in which a career is identified exclusively with promotion through the official hierarchy, modern scientific thought interprets it as a dynamic trajectory of acquiring the competencies, experience and leadership potential necessary to perform tasks in the field of security and defence.

2. From the perspective of state security theory, career growth serves to reproduce managerial and command potential, which is critically important in a situation of prolonged armed aggression. A military serviceman who goes through successive stages of career development accumulates not only professional knowledge and skills, but also the ability to make decisions, manage units and take responsibility for the consequences of such decisions. In such circumstances, career growth becomes an important tool for ensuring the institutional stability of Ukraine's security and defence forces.

3. An important conceptual element of career growth is leadership (military leadership), which is substantiated as one of the key factors in the professional development of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine. The purpose of military leadership at any level of command is to ensure the professional and responsible performance by servicemen of their official duties and assigned tasks in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine and the norms of international law. In this context, military leadership functions as an integrative managerial quality that combines professional, moral and psychological, and social-communicative characteristics necessary for effective command and control of personnel.

4. Improving the career growth of military personnel of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine requires a transition from fragmented managerial decisions to a comprehensive theoretical and methodological model that integrates regulatory and legal frameworks, the system of military education, professional development, and leadership as key factors in ensuring state security.

Further scientific research will be aimed at moving from the theoretical comprehension of the problem of career growth of military personnel to the development of scientifically grounded models and practical mechanisms for their implementation in the activities of the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine.



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*The article was submitted to the editorial office on 21 November 2025*

**УДК 351.86:355:331.108(477)**

**М. С. Пузырьов, І. Є. Морозов**

## **ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ЗАСАДИ ВДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ КАР'ЄРНОГО ЗРОСТАННЯ ВІЙСЬКОВОСЛУЖБОВЦІВ СИЛ БЕЗПЕКИ І ОБОРОНИ УКРАЇНИ**

У статті здійснено комплексний теоретико-методологічний аналіз проблеми вдосконалення кар'єрного зростання військовослужбовців сил безпеки і оборони України в умовах тривалої збройної агресії РФ та дії правового режиму воєнного стану. Обґрунтовано, що кар'єрне зростання військовослужбовців доцільно розглядати не лише як індивідуальний процес службового просування, а як системний і безперервний процес професійного, управлінського та особистісного розвитку, який безпосередньо впливає на кадрову безпеку, інституційну стійкість і спроможність держави забезпечувати національну та державну безпеку.

На основі аналізу сучасних наукових підходів, а також чинної нормативно-правової бази у сфері проходження військової служби та військової освіти визначено ключові проблеми функціонування системи кар'єрного зростання військовослужбовців, зокрема її фрагментарність, домінування формалізованих критеріїв службового просування, недостатній рівень прозорості кадрових процедур і обмежену інтеграцію результатів освіти та професійної підготовки у процес прийняття кадрових рішень. Наголошено, що в умовах воєнного стану зазначені проблеми набувають особливої актуальності та можуть негативно впливати на ефективність виконання завдань силами безпеки і оборони України.

*Особливу увагу приділено обґрунтуванню ролі професійного розвитку, системи професійної військової освіти (Professional Military Education) та військового лідерства як ключових чинників формування ефективних кар'єрних траєкторій військовослужбовців. Підкреслено значення принципів меритократії, системності, безперервності освіти, інституційної відповідальності та відповідності євроатлантичним стандартам управління людськими ресурсами в силах безпеки і оборони України. Доведено, що вдосконалення кар'єрного зростання має розглядатися як стратегічний напрям кадрової політики держави, спрямований на збереження й розвиток людського потенціалу, формування управлінського резерву та підвищення ефективності діяльності сил безпеки і оборони України в умовах сучасних безпекових викликів.*

**Ключові слова:** кар'єрне зростання, державна безпека, військовослужбовці, сили безпеки і оборони, збройна агресія, професійний розвиток, військове лідерство, військова освіта.

**Puzyrov Mykhailo** – Doctor of Law, Senior Researcher, Head of the Department of Legal Disciplines, National Academy of the National Guard of Ukraine  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7814-9476>

**Morozov Ihor** – Candidate of Military Sciences, Senior Researcher, Head of the Scientific and Organizational Department of the Center for Organization and Coordination of Scientific and Innovative Activities, National Academy of the National Guard of Ukraine  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9643-481X>