The FUTURE of the ARMY PROFESSION

with a Foreword by
General (Retired) Frederick M. Franks, USA

project directors
Don M. Snider
Gayle L. Watkins

edited by
Lloyd J. Matthews

United States Military Academy

2002

McGraw-Hill Primis Custom Publishing

Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York San Francisco St. Louis
Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Lisbon London Madrid
Mexico City Milan New Delhi Seoul Singapore Sydney Taipei Toronto

6. We are indebted to Lt. Col. Patrick Sweeney for conducting interviews with officer students at the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College. The data from the interview sample were gathered by Lt. Col. Sweeney while he was a student at the staff college in 1995-1996.
7. Interviews were conducted by Lt. Col. Patrick Sweeney.
8. Interviews were conducted by Dr. Philip Lewis as part of another study.
9. Lisa Lahey, Emily Souvaine, Robert Kegan, Robert Goodman, and Sally Felix, *A Guide to the Subject Object Interview: Its Administration and Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Subject-Object Research Group, 1988).
10. Interview scores may represent a full stage (e.g., stage 2 or 3) or a transition between stages (somewhere between two stages). For example, transitional scores between stages 2 and 3 are 2(3), 2/3, 3/2, and 3(2). These scores represent differences in the degree to which a stage 2 or a stage 3 perspective dominates. Hence agreement between scorers within one-fifth of a stage might involve scores of 2/3 and scores of 3/2. Continuing with this example, agreement within two-fifths of a stage involves scores between 2/3 and 3(2).
11. Scores of 2(3), 2/3, 3/2, and 3(2) represent progressive scorable distinctions in the transition between a full stage 2 and a full stage 3; scores of 3(4), 3/4, 4/3, and 4(3) represent progressive scorable distinctions in the transition between a full stage 3 and a full stage 4.
12. Ibid.
13. "A" subjects entered the study as freshmen; "B" subjects entered as sophomores.
14. Kegan, *The Evolving Self*, 167; Lahey et al., *Guide to the Subject-Object Interview*, 94-131.
15. Preliminary data from a sample of Army captains enrolled in a master's degree program in preparation for the role of West Point Tactical Officers for the Corps of Cadets suggest that the vast majority of these officers are functioning at stage 3.
16. Department of the Army, "The Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer Study Report to the Army," Department of the Army (May 2001): OS-3; available from *http://www.army.mil/atld/report/pdf*; Internet; accessed 16 August 2001.

18 Backbone vs. Box: The Choice between Principled and Prescriptive Leadership[1]

Anna Simons

Officers belong to what is often described as the world's oldest profession. Do soldiers really predate priests or chiefs? We'll never know for sure. But officership has to count as one of humanity's most enduring social inventions.

Without question, significant shifts have occurred in terms of whether officers command from the front or the rear, compel or impel, transform or transact, and manage or lead. However, this chapter will contend that the services which officers and only officers can provide haven't really changed. Nor can they. In addition to fulfilling organizational and functional requirements, officership meets bio-political as well as sociological demands—demands which will remain the same no matter how dramatically future battlescapes alter.

Though the Army must always worry about what looms ahead, I want to suggest that it is equally essential to consider what still lurks within, namely, the all-too-human desire to be directed, if not led. This chapter will suggest a way in which it may actually be possible to address both concerns via the same approach—principled leadership—thereby taking advantage of what we do know in order to address what we can't know.

My general thesis is this: not only does operating from a set of core convictions or principles grant leaders at all levels maximum flexibility while minimizing a range of different frictions, but having principled leaders satisfies soldiers' demands. Absent the flexibility and adaptability afforded by principled leadership, the Army's future success would depend on its present ability to foresee accurately tomorrow's operational concepts and scenarios. That is a tall order. No one could have forecast U.S. involvement in Somalia twelve or, arguably, even two months before the fact. Were we the least bit prepared for an exodus of over 630,000 refugees from Kosovo or for their later return? Who would have suspected in August 2001 that we'd be fighting a war in Afghanistan in the fall? As these or any number of other recent military interventions would suggest, the only thing we can say with assurance today is that we will be surprised again tomorrow. In terms of how to react, meanwhile, we can no more count on controlling the what, where, and when of future confrontations than we can command the weather; we don't always understand others' motivations or their methods. What we should be able to rely on, though, is the extent to which we know ourselves. And where our own strengths lie *as* Americans *is* in principles, and not just in tactics, techniques, and procedures, vital as these are. This is yet another reason to (re)turn to principles, though the gist of my argument is more elemental still: in conditions of flux humans need to be able to count on something fixed, while what is fixed has to be flexible too, paradoxical as that may sound.

In what follows I contend that humans need a hierarchy of values even when, and perhaps especially when, circumstances call for maximum behavioral flexibility. From an anthropological perspective, I demonstrate the extent to which officers often resemble Big Men more than they do Chiefs (terms I'll return to below), which means that they impel rather than compel and employ carrots as well as sticks. I make the point that an officer's most effective tool is to engage in principled behavior. I then go on to examine some of the principles of officership which have withstood the test of time, as well as those which seem to be challenged by postmodern change. I use Special Forces teams and two superlative military advisors—T.E. Lawrence and Edward Lansdale—to illustrate that principled officership remains integral even in decentralized situations. These are exactly the kinds of situations which soldiers confront. The world, after all, lacks geopolitical balance, units increasingly experience turbulence, and combat always causes turmoil. In the face of this, principles, like a backbone, offer consistency, resilience, and strength.

The Hierarchical Imperative

As humans, we are, to borrow from Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, "imperial animals."[2] We invariably form hierarchies. Even in what anthropologists call "stateless" societies, which by definition lack formal government—where there are no permanent government structures, police forces, or officials of any kind—leaders arise. In foraging societies, for instance, one man may be a better hunter. Someone else might be a better healer. In societies where elders, as a group, deserve respect some individuals will always be listened to more closely; inevitably there are a few who command more attention than their peers. Why? Because they strive for this? Or because others won't, don't want to, or can't measure up?

Interestingly, in much of the leadership literature little is said about the competition involved in rising to the top. Anthropologists' accounts, in contrast, describe strategic struggles among New Guinea Highlanders, Swat Pathans, Kwakiutl, with the list stretching on and on. In both sets of literature the focus tends to be on what makes leaders effective and what effects they then have on their followers. Occasionally there are discussions about followers' desires: what they want of, from, and in their leaders. But not even in leadership manuals is it explained why followers might want to be followers and not leaders themselves.[3]

The literature never explicitly labels leaders winners and followers losers, but reading between the lines this is what it strongly suggests. If leaders have such qualities as ambition, character, drive, and ideas, then followers must lack them. Or they lack something else, perhaps self-esteem, self-confidence, skills, or smarts. Yet, what if many simply prefer to not compete? What if, instead, they'd rather belong? Or what if they like being directed by someone else, and would rather work for someone they admire, and alongside others, rather than for (or by) themselves? To anyone with drive or ambition this must sound unreal, impossible, or false.[4]

Indeed, to most Americans "moving up" must seem to be a universal goal. However, hierarchicized divisions of labor that have existed for generations generally persist not only because those at the top manage to successfully constrain those below, but because there are costs associated with exerting control. Or, to turn this around, so long as the price paid by subordinates is not too high (or can be rationalized away), the contest to become superior (or even autonomous) may not be considered worthwhile. Concomitant with different values (and rewards) attached to different kinds of work are different expected behaviors. Generally speaking, individuals lower down the ladder are granted (or grant themselves) more latitude to express themselves freely, display emotions, and act out in public.[5] The obverse is true for those in control; they must act controlled. Ergo the stiff upper lip (at least in public).[6] In other words, regardless of—and maybe even in psychic proportion to—the benefits leaders accrue, leadership is presumed to exact what many regard as too burdensome or too difficult a toll (though not a toll those who become leaders must mind).

Despite our "take-charge" attitudes, American ambivalence toward leadership—and even toward leaders themselves—runs deep. At the moment, for instance, we are consumed with weighing, justifying, and bemoaning what might be lost as we choose greater responsibilities for higher pay but longer hours. Attaining power costs time; exerting power consumes energy. We constantly weigh the trade-offs. No less than the former Secretary of Labor himself, Robert Reich, has recently questioned the sacrifices he made during his own rise to the top. Yet, no matter how predisposed we might be to think in terms of quid pro quos, it is unclear whether rewards and sacrifices are ever directly proportional.

For instance, in the all-volunteer force the quid pro quo we might expect for leaders vis-à-vis followers, in terms of risks and rewards, is turned on its head. The playing field is even when it comes to who makes the ultimate sacrifice: everyone commits to it. Yet, having said this, do senior officers work harder than juniors? Or put in longer hours? Lieutenants and captains would probably scream No. But the seniors earn more money and receive innumerable additional benefits. How do they justify this? How would we?

The clear answer is that those higher up the chain of command are responsible for more lives, more equipment, and more weighty decisions.[7] The more heretical answer would be that the Army can't operate without chains of command and has to have something to make its leadership division of labor as perceptible as is the division of labor between, say, armor, artillery, and infantry. The irony is that the further away from low-level, hands-on troop command that one moves, the harder it may be to clearly define precise leadership responsibilities. All the more reason, then, to make the hierarchy look as strong and well-delineated as possible, though in significant ways the more removed from soldiers officers are, the more control over them they can have.

Officers: Big Men or Chiefs?

Anthropologists often draw a distinction between two types of leaders: Big Men and Chiefs. Big Men have prestige. Chiefs hold power. Prestige is evanescent; it can't be

consolidated over time or inherited without continual expenditure of effort. In the hunt for more prestige, Big Men strive to maintain and attract more and more followers from whom they solicit the makings of grand feasts where everything collected will then be consumed or given away. The point is to *seem* big, a point they must make over and over again in the face of never-ending, often-escalating competition. Reputation, in such a contest, is paramount. Thus, Big Men devote inordinate amounts of time to impression and image management, planning, plotting, and worrying. And for what ends? At best all they can do is dominate the social scene. They can't dominate anything else.[8]

Chiefs, in contrast, not only dominate, they domineer.[9] Unlike Big Men, Chiefs have coercive authority. Either they have armed forces at their disposal, who assist them in making others do what they want, and/or they possess divine powers. As a consequence, Chiefs have the capacity to inspire fear as well as command respect. They *are* in control. Or, to redraw the contrast, Chiefs can make people do things; at best, Big Men can only get them to want to help.

So which, would we say, describes officers? In today's Army, would we characterize officers as Big Men or as Chiefs? The academic answer is, of course, that they represent a bit of both, though the ratio of Big Manship to Chiefliness seems to increase as individuals rise through the ranks. All officers are Chieflike by virtue of being vested with command authority; those who command soldiers can not only give direct lawful orders but can also mete out nonjudicial punishment. And like leaders who wield coercive authority elsewhere, officers of all types and in all positions seek to maintain distance between themselves and their subordinates.[10] There are legions of ways in which they do this—physically, materially, ideologically, and/or symbolically.[11] The officer-enlisted divide itself exemplifies this, though as officers advance they make use of all sorts of distancing techniques to preserve separations even among themselves. This is written all over uniforms. But it is also made evident in, for instance, the size of higher-ups' staffs and how difficult gaining access to those higher-ups may be—or is made to be.

Of course, there are practical reasons for limited access, large staffs, and other perquisites of power which wind up reinforcing distance. But we also shouldn't forget that distinction is integral to hierarchy—something which is much easier to maintain (and cultivate) in garrison, during peacetime, and in higher headquarters, than in the field, during war, and in operational units. Without question, the hierarchical hope is that patterns of deference, obedience, respect, and order established during peacetime and training will carry over into war. Or, alternatively, the goal is that no one should think that such patterns don't carry over. But consider: when a unit is on its own, confronting discomfort, danger, or disaster, its officers actually live no differently than their soldiers and wield no more power than a Big Man could.[12] Though officers may be in a position to tell subordinates what they want them to do, they can't force them to do those things, let alone make them do them well.[13] Nor can they prevent their soldiers from acting like the fictional Sergeant Svejk, an exemplary goldbricker.[14]

Everyone has heard stories about soldiers who have found ingenious ways to thumb their noses at commanders by following the letter rather than the spirit of the law (even in combat). Thus, regardless of the fact that the stick looms larger than the carrot in the sense that those who choose not to follow orders *will* be punished (Big Men, remember, can't punish), officers who hope to succeed in battle, to accomplish their missions, and/or to rise in the chain of command are far better off using incentives than threats. Field Manual 22-100, the Army's leadership bible, itself concentrates on carrots: how to treat and counsel subordinates in order to get the most out of them. Presumably this wouldn't be doctrinal advice if followers' enthusiasm and support wasn't understood to be essential to mission accomplishment and leaders' success.

Interestingly, when we examine how Chiefs (and kings, emperors, rulers, and dictators) tend to treat their armed forces—as opposed to their subjects—we see something very similar. In societies where a national leader depends directly on wielders of force for his authority he will dangle all sorts of incentives in front of them in order to keep them eager to work on his behalf, with him, and for him. Tellingly, in this country the higher up the chain one looks the less officers have to depend on subordinates to help secure their reputation or assure their longevity as leaders. Instead, where subordinates' impressions matter most is at the tip of the spear, in units. There, most officers realize, at least in theory (and certainly this is what they are taught), that how well they do depends on what they can get, *not force*, their soldiers to do, while to accomplish this—as all the manuals make clear—they must lead.

In classic Big Man societies, where the societal ideal is to be generous, Big Men lead by being big, with the selfish aim of proving themselves *bigger than*. In the Army, according to the most recent edition of FM 22-100, "lead" means "be, know, do."[15] Does this mean, as with Big Men, "be, know, do" *better than*?

Time-Tested Principles

According to Raimondo Montecuccoli, a preeminent seventeenth-century commander and strategist, "The ideal commander was warlike, in good health, and of martial stature. He should possess moral strength, prudence, and above all have 'force,' a quality embracing courage, fortitude, energy, and determination, similar to the *virtu* demanded by Machiavelli and the *constantia* praised by Lipsius."[16] Some three centuries later, U.S. Army Chief of Staff Edward Meyer emphasized the importance of character: "Character is ingrained principle expressed consciously and unconsciously to subordinates, superiors, and peers alike—honesty, loyalty, self-confidence, humility, and self-sacrifice. Its expression to all audiences must ring with authenticity."[17] Tim O'Brien, a writer and veteran of Vietnam, describes a platoon leader he admired this way: "He was insanely calm. He never showed fear. He was a professional soldier, an ideal leader of men in the field."[18]

If we consider the continuities, two things stand out. First, the inner character and inner convictions leaders are said to have must be made manifest somehow. And second, the ideals they embody have to resonate. Is it mere coincidence that the traits Edgar Puryear finds in most top military leaders—integrity, humility, selflessness, concern for others, reverence, and showmanship—can all be outwardly displayed?[19] Hardly. Leaders have to give evidence, somehow, that they are worth

following, as well as being personally worthy of the sacrifices they might (and likely will) demand. Those who would be leaders will therefore find it advisable to come across as confident, credible, courageous, decisive, just, honest, loyal, and selfless. Moreover, they should set the example and manifest self-control.

Leadership manuals and guides draw from at least two broad sources.[20] One is clearly the past: what character traits, attitudes, and behaviors have characterized exemplary military leaders through the ages? The second is human nature—or, to be more precise, the unchanging nature of social relations. At any rate, the profitable use of examples from the past implies that the nature of social relations is unchanging. For instance, even as FM 22-100 warns aspiring leaders about "the stress of change" ahead, it refers them to Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, because:

> FM 100-5 provides a doctrinal framework for coping with these challenges while executing operations. It gives Army leaders clues as to what they will face and what will be required of them, but *as COL Chamberlain found on Little Round Top*, no manual can cover all the possibilities. The essence of leadership remains the same: Army leaders create a vision of what's necessary, communicate it in a way that makes their intent clear, and vigorously execute it to achieve success."[21]

I quote the passage above at such length because its claim—that the essence of leadership hasn't changed since the unexpected will always occur—tells only half of what we already know. It's really the essence of human relations that hasn't changed, but recurs in familiar ways. Otherwise, it would make little sense for the manual to use Colonel Chamberlain at Gettysburg to illustrate exemplary leadership. Gettysburg was fought 138 years ago. Presumably everything about war has changed since then. Except, of course, the human element.

Not surprisingly, John Mattox is able to trace "principles of moral military leadership" back to Augustine's day,[22] while, as Lloyd Matthews might add, it is not so much the "broad ethical ideals" themselves which have proliferated over the centuries but rather the literature about them.[23]

Yet, no matter how carefully the historical record has been plumbed to yield lists which double as guides, the catch for every officer is that he or she has to re-create this ideal past all over again in the present. And though the Army may offer all sorts of methods for assisting officers to do this, it can't control for all of the dynamics they will encounter. There is interpersonal chemistry to take into account. Also, individual officers may be no more adept at fieldcraft (or soldiering) than are their soldiers. Nevertheless, what soldiers still want officers to be *is* "better than."[24] And they want this without officers implying that they think they are "better than." Thus, the only realm in which officers can't be bested turns out to be the overarching realm of principled, moral, and ethical behavior.

Since there is no better-than-principled behavior, *being* principled amounts to a virtue in and of itself. Moreover, the fact that it is never easy to remain principled, especially in war, abroad, under stress, during crises, *and* when presented with contrary temptation, helps render the foregoing proposition that much more significant and lends incalculable worth to officers who are principled.

Soldiers need principled leaders for both noble and prosaic reasons. A leader who acts in a principled way represents order and inspires cohesiveness as well as confidence, which are the antitheses of what war promises. If we rethink the attributes desired in leaders—fortitude, strength, composure—they represent fixity in conditions of extreme flux. One can think of a range of related traits—dependability, trustworthiness, reliability, consistency, good judgment—to describe someone who is principled.

There is probably more tacit agreement in the combat literature about the significance of being principled than there is regarding which principles officers should adhere to. Some principles, such as those brought forward by Don Snider, John Nagl, and Tony Pfaff, are suggested as those from which officers "should draw both their vision and their motivation."[25] Other lists of principles describe how officers should act and what they should do to be considered leaders. All, again, have been carefully distilled from what has worked through time and across space. Significantly, though, not a single one of these tells officers what to do in specific situations;[26] they can't. Given the messiness of real world encounters, officers have to be able to apply situational ethics to whatever might confront them. But if we think about it, this means that the thing officers most need—which is to know *what* to do—no one else can provide, except possibly those subordinates who are there with them (on the spot, in the field, in combat, in the unit). Yet *to lead* means never having to be told by subordinates what is the "right" or "moral" thing to do.

This, I would argue, is the source of an officer's power. Whether he or she can *consistently* make the "right" decisions determines whether or not others will consistently follow. Soldiers expect officers to be the authority on what is the right thing to do—tactically, doctrinally, legally, morally. Whenever officers can prove soldiers correct about this, they lead.

One could almost argue that this renders officership a profession within a profession: officers' work is leadership. Their survival in the system depends on their moral expertise, their maintaining control over the jurisdiction of deciding what is or is not the appropriate thing to do, and their being able to prove the legitimacy of their decision-making to subordinates (and civilian authorities) through journals, special schools, courses, and academies. However, there is at least one problem with such a comparison. Historically, professions never have formal, permanently fixed, and clearly ranked hierarchies. At most they display informal and fiercely contested pecking orders in which seniority matters, but in which senior partners do not *command* junior partners. Just consider: generals and their aides will never share the same status while still in uniform. This alone renders the kind of hierarchy the Army has—and requires—unique. At least thus far.

Postmodern Challenges

However, hierarchy as an organizing principle, at the small unit level especially, may be in jeopardy. In 1974, Morris Janowitz was already noting that "the basis of authority has shifted from that of an authoritarian domination to manipulation, persuasion, and group consensus."[27] He attributes this shift to "changing societal values" and the "impact of technology." Writing more than a decade later, Daryl

Henderson likewise comments on "a significant historical shift downwards in the locus of control."[28]

Even more recently, in describing postmodern leadership challenges, French sociologist Bernard Boëne and British sociologist Christopher Dandeker acknowledge remarkable congruence between their conclusions and those reached by two Israelis, Boas Shamir and Eyal Ben-Ari.[29] The latter's prediction is that:

> The military organization of the future is likely to be much more "organic" in nature. Organic organizations are characterized by a more flexible division of labor, decentralization of decision-making, low reliance on formal authority and hierarchy and on rules and regulations to coordinate work, and greater reliance on nonrestricted, two-way, informal communication and coordination systems.[30]

Along the same lines, but in an even more pointed way, David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla, among other war futurists, advocate a new and hybrid form of networked organization "in which 'all-channel' networks are fitted to flattened hierarchies."[31]

Those who take such a tack, predicting or promoting the (d)evolution of hierarchy (or its transformation into something else, or less), do so out of the belief that something fundamental has changed in the world at large. They cite young peoples' expectations and attitudes, the technological and organizational capabilities of our opponents (and ourselves), and/or the increasingly diffuse nature of conflict, which may involve state, parastate, and substate actors anywhere in the world. They argue that so long as potential missions run the gamut from coalitional war-making to coalitional peacekeeping, there is a "greater need for versatility, flexibility, and adaptability" in size, design, responsiveness, recruits, in—essentially—everything.[32]

To recast what they are saying in only slightly different terms: basically, as the world's youth become better-informed, more nonconformist, and more self-absorbed,[33] as our enemies become more politically, economically, and socially but not conventionally militarily disruptive—the more complex and multinational our missions will become, and the harder it will be to exert control. Experientially, militaries have long had to cope with challenges posed by entropy, the intrinsic tendency toward disorder. As Martin van Creveld points out, there have generally been two alternative responses when the ground shifts tectonically: tighten "command *and* control," or decentralize and delegate in turn.[34] The problem with the latter approach, though, is that to decentralize, and still win, vertical integration must somehow be maintained. At the very least, everyone has to be singing from the same sheet of music—something far easier to achieve when everyone already shares internalized "values and norms," and when there is already "unity of thought."

As an organizational principle, unity of thought has few parallels. It facilitates unity of effort among separated forces in fluid environments, and is liberating in at least two senses. Any part of the organization should know how to replicate (or repair) the whole. This has to offer psychic comfort. At the same time, with less structure to worry about, it should be easier for units to reconfigure in response to novel situations. The staff of Moltke the Elder, for instance, shared "ethical and even religious ideals which served as the basis for calm confidence."[35] John Gates credits the success of American Army volunteers in the Philippine insurrection of

1899-1901 to their being a "self-assured group with a self-conscious progressive orientation and a commitment to such traditional values as Duty-Honor-Country."[36]

Since the days of Napoleon, armies have worked hard to instill common values and norms when these were not already present. However, as Shamir and Ben-Ari caution, "achieving coordination through culture" may be increasingly difficult today.[37] They make this comment in light of "the frequently changing composition of the organizational and interorganizational frameworks that bring together members of different organizational and sometimes national cultures."[38] However, their observation may be equally apt when applied to advice offered today's leaders: namely, to be sensitive to, and even appreciative of, subcultural, gender, and other differences, as well as differing opinions.

This cannot but complicate a leader's role, which among other things is to build consensus *for* (or consensus from) without soldiers discovering, in a Heisenbergian twist, that the act of trying to reach a consensus among themselves prevents its achievement. At the same time, the need to soften (never mind flatten) hierarchy to foster strength through diversity reveals the Army's default in what may well be its chief responsibility to those it commissions, which is to place them in charge of soldiers who, as individuals, should all regard themselves as members of the Army—their *national* Army—first, and members of other groups or subcultures a clear and distant second.[39]

At a minimum, soldiers should come to units already regarding themselves *as* soldiers.[40] Otherwise, unity of effort—which requires that individuals think in terms of the good-of-the-group and not themselves—won't always (and may seldom) be achieved. Under conditions of confused (or even multiple) allegiances, organized decentralization will never work. In his book, *Command in War*, van Creveld analyzes four armies which purposely disaggregated their units and succeeded.[41] Worth noting, however, is that authority was purposely diffused between units, not diluted within them.

Organized Decentralization: A Contradiction in Terms?

If organized decentralization (or some approximation thereof) is to be introduced, there are in the meantime at least two sets of examples worth paying attention to: that of the Special Forces, and two different "armies of one" symbolized by T.E. Lawrence and Edward Lansdale.

Curiously, despite all the discussion in the military leadership literature about teams and teamwork, and what may or may not be applicable from the realms of business and management, little is said about the fact that teams already exist in the Army, and have for decades. More to the point still, many do exactly what it is said conventional units will do in the future. For example, Special Forces operational detachments—the term "operational detachment" itself speaks volumes—are not only designed to "deal in the gray" but to be left on their own for long periods of time, as is presumably the case in Afghanistan today. Until the end of the Cold War, Special Forces (SF) could be considered distinctive thanks to its unconventional warfare,

counterinsurgency, and foreign internal defense missions. These required that SF soldiers be adept at winning hearts and minds and building rapport. SF may no longer be quite so alone when it comes to plying these particular skills, since peacekeeping operations and humanitarian interventions make similar demands. But the label "unconventional" unquestionably holds when applied to the teams' organization and the officer-enlisted relationship.

The individual who is officially in charge of an "A" Detachment—the captain—is often only nominally in charge of the warrant officer and ten noncommissioned officers (NCOs) on his team. Usually, the team sergeant has the more commanding presence. In part, this is a function of the team's division of labor: the team sergeant (an E8) is responsible for the world inside the team room while the officer interfaces with the world beyond. But also, the captain is not just chronologically younger than many of the men who serve under him (sometimes by as much as a decade), he is more inexperienced than most. Thus, they are unlikely to automatically look up to him, nor can he often present himself as an authority on anything having to do with their job(s), though he can know more about their next mission, about the country where they might deploy, the people there, etc.

Special Forces NCOs joke that the definition of a good captain is someone who knows when to defer to them. And, indeed, smart captains seem to understand exactly how to do this to earn respect: they don't initiate competition they can't win and, ideally, they don't engage in competition at all. In other words, they don't act like experts, while when they defer to others *as* experts it is in only certain domains.

This is not quite what the Army's leadership manuals advise, or what these officers would have done previously when commanding soldiers younger and more inexperienced than themselves. So how do they know, when new to SF, to do this? How do they know *how* to do this? The short answer is, they don't. Their success is simply an outgrowth of principled behavior.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate what I mean by behaving in a principled way is to compare two of the unconventional world's most prominent and successful figures, T.E. Lawrence and Edward Lansdale, though in the course of achieving their successes (Lawrence in Arabia, Lansdale in the Philippines) neither led a team of compatriots.[42] Instead, both men were military advisors: they could not command, nor could they control. All they could reasonably do was exemplify, suggest, project, and, to an uncanny degree, fit FM 22-100's prescriptions for how to lead.

Each did so, though, using radically different techniques. Lawrence was adept at everything Bedouin; Lansdale never tried to live or speak like a Filipino. Lawrence was an expert about the Bedouins long before he began advising them; Lansdale was interested in reading people, not about them.[43] Each operated at what amounted to opposite ends of the advisory spectrum. Nevertheless, both knew their own strengths and weaknesses (again, as FM 22-100 advises), and both fully appreciated what they could and could not be expert in *from their advisees' point of view.*

Nothing spells this out better than Lawrence's "Twenty-seven Articles," his own lessons learned as distilled into principles for others to use. For instance, here is Article 18:

> Disguise is not advisable. Except in special areas let it be clearly known that you are a British officer and a Christian. At the same time if you can wear Arab kit when with the tribes you will acquire their trust and intimacy to a degree impossible in uniform. It is however dangerous and difficult. They make no special allowances for you when you dress like them. Breaches of etiquette not charged against a foreigner are not condoned to you in Arab clothes.[44]

In other words, Lawrence was not just savvy enough to know how to dress like a Bedouin (Articles 17, 19, and 20 offer more specific advice about what was best to wear), but he also understood what Bedouins would and wouldn't let him get away with as either a Briton (which he was) or a Bedu (which he knew he could never be).

In contrast, Lansdale never developed anything like Lawrence's expertise regarding what Filipinos would have allowed him to do or not do as an intimate. But, then, he never had to. He found that he didn't need to operate from a set of principles related to them (let alone a set of principles built around *how* to relate to them). He excelled instead by operating from his own core convictions about what it meant to be an American, and only had to understand what Filipinos expected *this* to mean. In other words—while Lawrence proved consistent regarding Bedouins' expectations of him as someone who knew what it meant to be Bedouin, and thus knew in which areas it was acceptable to best them (e.g., endurance, marksmanship, etc.), and when to not even try (e.g., in discussions about religion and women)—Lansdale's expertise was in democracy and in being American.[45]

Not surprisingly, Lansdale's approach turns out to be in keeping with how most Americans behave abroad. We invariably project American values and ideals. The fact that these include (if they don't revolve around) being and acting the same, no matter where or among whom we find ourselves, may itself be our defining principle, while the fact that we judge one another accordingly only reaffirms our commitment to that principle.[46]

From American Principles to Principled Americans?

Although every society can be said to have a set of principles by which its members are expected to live, we regard ours as universal human truths. We not only place emphasis on our absolute equality as individuals, both before the law and before one another, but our expectation is to always be treated fairly, as anyone should be, regardless of position, status, or rank.

At first glance this might seem to make hierarchy unAmerican. However, as Gerald Linderman points out in a book chapter titled "Discipline: Not the American Way" (in his seminal work on combat experience during World War II), Americans will accede to hierarchy so long as it's equitable. What American combat soldiers in World War II desired, for instance, "was not a standing equivalent to that of officers but acknowledgment of an equivalent worth."[47] As he explains elsewhere, what American soldiers have historically wanted (and needed) from officers is to know where officers stand, what they stand for, what they won't stand for, and that they

will always be fair.[48] This was true during the Civil War, when officers were often elected, and still held a century later, with appointees in place.[49]

Why would soldiers be so consistent and adamant about this? No doubt because, as Lloyd Matthews has written,

> Such revered documents as the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights have given rise to an American political tradition in which liberty and equality remain vibrant touchstone ideals among U.S. citizens. Though these values obviously cannot receive full or even substantial expression in military service, they do instill boundary expectations in the minds of service members that military leaders ignore at their peril.[50]

Not all of this, of course, is particularly or peculiarly American. For instance, Linderman quotes a British soldier who says, "Trust depends on a man's knowing that his commander thinks of him as a person and therefore treats him fairly, and looks after him."[51] But we, being a longer-lived, more deeply-rooted meritocracy, may push this even further. Meritocracies work only when status is achieved, not ascribed. And the Army is a classic meritocracy. Therefore, the presumption among soldiers is that those above them must have, somehow, demonstrably proven that they deserve to be where they are. And like Big Men, officers must keep proving and demonstrating this worth. Yet, to whom? What superiors need from officers seems vastly different from what subordinates do, in part perhaps because what merits worth for superiors is not necessarily what merits worth for subordinates. Often, though, this leads to wildly different judgments by subordinates and superiors about the same officer. Must this be? Should this be?

If principled behavior binds us together as Americans, and particular principles (such as equity) define us as a nation, then surely being able to be counted on *to be* principled is the one standard by which the Army could—and should—measure fitness, up and down the chain of command. Arguably, this is how we all judge one another anyway—rank, status, position be damned.

If the Army doesn't do this more consistently—or explicitly—it runs two risks: first, that informal pecking orders will undermine its formal order; and second, that the trappings of hierarchy are shown to be just that—devices. Neither is something the Army can long afford, since without differentiating people—and making subordinates *want* those differences to matter—control won't stick.[52]

Backbone vs. Box

Again, it seems important to bear in mind that the Army does not need to maintain control merely for its own sake, but for the sake of those it seeks to control. Not everyone wants to lead. Either people recognize their own limitations, or realize they can't (or don't want to) set limits for others. Limits is a shorthand way to think about officers' domain: they remind soldiers of and about limits, set limits, interpret limits, and help subordinates stay within or push beyond accepted limits.

Limits have always been critical, but today—given real-time scrutiny by the news media, international agencies, and concerned citizens—they may be more important

than ever before, especially since the Army has never been confronted by so many culturally alien, morally messy, and potentially victoryless missions. All the more reason to grant more, not less, control to those on site, those who know what's happening on the ground and can better read the local situation. To be able to grant leaders at the tip of the spear more control, though, demands and requires trust. Trust, meanwhile, comes from knowing subordinates can be counted on. This is less tautological than it is self-reinforcing: if everyone operates from the same set of principles—and proves principled—there would be no need for doubt or second-guessing.

Also, principles, once internalized, are always there; doctrinal manuals and models may well not be. Not only does operating from a strong principled core/corps offer maximum flexibility, but it avoids artificially constraining (as may a model) or delimiting (as can doctrine). Perhaps the best way to conceptualize this is graphically. Think of principles as a Backbone. With deeply embedded core convictions, officers should be able to operate anywhere; they don't have to think about what *not* to do; they know from within. But lacking such core convictions they would have to be told. Because command has to make sure that everyone understands where the limits are to what's acceptable, constraints would be set externally and generated from without, not within. Ergo the Box.

Without question this is what some people would prefer—the comfort of being in a Box. Boxes offer protection, among other things. Small wonder it's then difficult to pry people out of them. Or that the Army finds itself *needing* to tell leaders to "think outside the box."

Of course, if there were no Box, there'd be no reason to tell leaders to think outside it. If, instead, the Army trusted—and entrusted—officers to be principled it could think, talk, and operate in terms of Backbone instead.

Which would build and bolster confidence? Which represents the more positive approach? Surely having Backbone is the means test the Army needs to apply in peopling its hierarchy: only those with inner conviction have the strength, resiliency, wisdom, and courage to set limits for those who prefer that limits be set. By switching metaphors—from Box to Backbone—the Army would simply be acknowledging this and using to maximum advantage our human penchant to self-select the extent to which we'd rather lead or follow.

To summarize. What followers want is to be able to count on their leaders, while what the Army should ask of its leaders is that they be able to be counted on. At the very least, they must be able to be counted on to know what *not* to do—tactically, ethically, strategically, politically.[53]

If equity, consistency, and acting in a principled way are inherent to being American, then it only makes sense to apply this standard—of officers being able to be counted on *for* principled behavior—up and down the line.

So long as superiors no less than subordinates can count on officers for principled behavior, they can relax top-down control (though not monitoring). By granting units more autonomy, they then grant themselves more flexibility.

In a messy world, few things are more important than flexibility at the strategic level, where national interests are at stake, or at the operational level, where the outcomes of campaigns are at stake, or at the tactical level, where lives are at stake.

But at the tactical level, down where the bullet meets the bone, soldiers have another need even more important than *flexibility*: they need something fixed, something they can trust and rely on no matter what. That something is their officer-leaders, officer-leaders who invariably are fair, morally courageous, and principled.

Notes

1. Thanks to Reginald Davis for an important off-hand remark; to Joe Andrade, Nick Mullen, and Ben Higginbotham for insightful comments on my initial draft; to Leland Young for prompting me to rethink and rephrase any number of critical points; and to Gayle Watkins for generously offering better ways to think about more things than I've managed to discuss. I'm (alas) responsible for all advice not taken, and any errors.
2. Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, *The Imperial Animal*, 2nd edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998).
3. Followers of specific leaders, yes—there are ample testimonials to what first attracted people to famous and yet-to-be famous men (and women) and then what kept them enthralled. Charisma is prominently mentioned. But not even Max Weber, who introduced the concept, believes charisma can be defined.
4. Also, consider: as Americans we are socialized not only to compete—for grades in school, for attention from our parents, teachers, and one another—but we are taught from an early age that the harder we choose to work the more this will propel us ahead. Not everyone learns this lesson soon enough. Not everyone accepts it. Meanwhile, keeping up with the Joneses when the Joneses are a moving target creates a vastly different set of societal ideals and standards than keeping up with the Joneses would if the Joneses just stood still.
5. See Paul Riesman, *First Find Your Child a Good Mother: The Construction of Self in Two African Communities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).
6. See V.G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: Black Man, Yellow Man, and White Man in an Age of Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969; reprint 1986).
7. As one infantry captain and former general's aide has pointed out: the higher up the chain one moves, the better prepared and not just compensated officers are, though (as he also notes) no one puts in longer hours than do generals.
8. Sociobiologists, evolutionary psychologists, and some biological anthropologists would argue that the more successful a Big Man is/remains, the more wives he would likely have, the more offspring, and the higher his inclusive fitness or reproductive success. However, inclusive fitness (as they point out) is not a conscious strategy. Instead it is the genes' way of disseminating themselves. Unfortunately, this explains everything but nothing at the same time. As much pleasure as a Big Man in the New Guinea Highlands may take in procreating (and recreating), it is surely not because he wants to make his genes happy. At most he wants as many children as possible to spread his name.
9. Most of those we think of, and still refer to, as chiefs in this country—e.g., Chief Joseph, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Osceola, etc.—were Big Men. They had no coercive authority. They could never compel followers to stay with them. Nor could they order or command men in battle. This granted an immense advantage to the U.S. Army.
10. Some classic techniques of doing this: people might be forbidden to set eyes on a ruler, except from a distance. Or he might never be seen to eat, let alone engage in any bodily function, by anyone outside his retinue.
11. For examples, see Abner Cohen, *Two Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974). Also, David Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

12. To take an extreme example: an officer might threaten to shoot a soldier for disobeying a direct order in combat, but once dead the soldier will never be able to comply with that order. If the officer needs the soldier, can he afford to threaten to shoot him? When officers need coercion most, they can afford only to use it carefully, strategically, and sparingly.

    The comparison between officers and Big Men actually holds in at least one other regard. In Big Man societies there may be status differentials, but these don't translate materially. Big Men eat the same, dress the same, and live the same as their dependents. More to the point still, there is a one-for-all, all-for-one ethos in Big Man societies (which is the ethos skillful Big Men work hard to reaffirm). Can't the same be said of officers at platoon and company levels, especially when they are in the field?
13. Soldiers themselves represent their only immediate means of force.
14. For more on this, see F.G. Bailey, *The Kingdom of Individuals: An Essay on Self-Respect and Social Obligation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).
15. Though "exemplify, suggest, project" might be no less accurate, and seems to be what the manual itself suggests.
16. Gunther Rothenberg, "Maurice of Nassau, Gustavus Adolphus, Raimondo Montecuccoli, and the 'Military Revolution' of the Seventeenth Century," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 61-62.
17. Edgar Meyer, "Leadership: A Return to Basics," *Military Review* 4 [journal online]; available from *http://www-cgsc.army.mil/milrev/english/janfeb97/meyer.html*; Internet; accessed 18 January 2001.
18. Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 347.
19. Edgar Puryear, *19 Stars: A Study in Military Character and Leadership* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1994/1971), 396.
20. For examples of the literature I refer to, beyond sources already cited, see: Dandridge Malone, *Small Unit Leadership: A Commonsense Approach* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983); Lloyd J. Matthews and Dale Brown, eds., *The Challenge of Military Leadership* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1989); Robert Taylor and William Rosenbach, eds., *Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence*, 2nd edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), in addition to FM 22-100.
21. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership: Be, Know, Do* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1999), 3-51, emphasis mine.
22. John Mattox, "Fifth-century Advice for 21st Century Leaders," *Military Review* [journal online]; available from *http://www-cgsc.army.mil/milrev/English/MayJune98/mat.html*; Internet; accessed 18 January 2001.
23. Lloyd J. Matthews, "The Evolution of American Military Ideals," *Military Review* 78 (January-February 1998): 51-61.
24. As Bernard Boëne points out: "Of the rank and file combatant, a minimum amount of courage or valiancy is expected—the capacity to control fear in the face of danger, discomfort, pain or misfortune, and to transgress the social taboos of civilian life when ordered to do so—together with physical agility and stamina, loyalty, and good will. Mastery of fairly simple tactical and technical skills is required.

    Of the leader, something more is expected: competence, composure, and self-control, inspiration by example, comprehension, and manipulation of human relations in the exercise of authority, formal (discipline) and informal (personality)." See "How 'Unique' Should the Military Be? A Review of Representative Literature and Outline of a Synthetic Formulation," *European Journal of Sociology* 31 (1990): 30; emphasis mine.
25. Don M. Snider, John A. Nagl, and Tony Pfaff, *Army Professionalism, the Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, December 1999), 36.

26. For instance, under the subheading "Integrity" FM 22-100 counsels, "People of integrity consistently act according to principles. . . . People of integrity do the right thing not because it's convenient or because they have no choice. They choose the right thing because their character permits no less. Conducting yourself with integrity has three parts:
    - Separating what's right from what's wrong.
    - Always acting according to what you know to be right, even at personal cost.
    - Saying openly that you're acting on your understanding of right versus wrong."

    However, nowhere is what *is* right described, delineated, or defined. See FM 22-100, 2-31.
27. Daryl Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Battle* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1985), 44.
28. John Johns, *Cohesion in the U.S. Military* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1984), 22.
29. Bernard Boëne and Christopher Dandeker, "Post-Cold War Challenges and Leadership Strategies in West European Military Institutions," in *Leadership for Change*, ed. Gwyn Harries-Jenkins (London/ Hull: European Research Office of the U.S. Army/ University of Hull, 1999), 11-29; Boas Shamir and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Leadership in an Open Army? Civilian Connections, Interorganizational Frameworks, and Changes in Military Leadership," in *Out of the Box Leadership: Transforming the Twenty-First-Century Army and Other Top-Performing Organizations*, eds. James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge, and Leonard Wong (Stamford, CT: JAI Press, 1999), 27.
30. Shamir and Ben-Ari, 27.
31. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Looking Ahead: Preparing for Information-age Conflict," in *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Information Age Conflict*, eds. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1997), 440.
32. Shamir and Ben-Ari, 27.
33. See Boëne and Dandeker. Also, see Shamir and Ben-Ari. This is yet another reason to reinforce principles. Everyone, ideally, should be taught principled behavior—and particularly since it can't be taken for granted that this has been taught in schools or in homes. Also, principled, good-of-the-group, selfless behavior, as Snider, Nagl, and Pfaff point out, differs significantly from what is or would be acceptable principled behavior among civilians. This, too, has to be emphasized.
34. Martin van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).
35. Van Creveld, 149.
36. John M. Gates, *The U.S. Army and Irregular Warfare* (1998), chapter 5, 5 [book on-line]; available from *http://www.wooster.edu/jgates/book-contents.html*; Internet; accessed 20 November 2000.
37. Shamir and Ben-Ari, 27.
38. Ibid, 28.
39. The Yugoslav army is an unfortunate example of a nationalist institution which wasn't quite nationalist enough. Although numbers of Yugoslav soldiers and officers regarded themselves as Yugoslavs first, and Croat, Bosniac, or Serb second, and many deserted and refused to fight for what rapidly became the Serb army, not enough either quit or refused to quit. Slobodan Milosevic was thus able to use paramilitaries to make up for his military shortfall, alongside Serb forces who remained in uniform.
40. As numerous people continually note, this is something the Marine Corps does extraordinarily well. The Army, interestingly enough, seems able to do this only in *selective* units, but even in these (e.g., the 82nd Airborne, Rangers, Special Forces) there is a self-selection process which is likely to attract only individuals who already think in these terms.
41. The four armies which purposely disaggregated with successful results were the French, Israeli, German, and Roman.

42. On Lawrence see John Mack, *A Prince of Our Disorder: The Life of T.E. Lawrence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976; reprint 1998). Also, T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1926; reprint 1963). On Lansdale see Cecil Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1998). Also, Edward Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991).
43. The contrast could be summarized this way: Lawrence did because he could, while Lansdale didn't because he couldn't. Lansdale couldn't learn other languages. He was also a miserable shot. But he clearly excelled at communicating with people of all walks of life—in large part by always treating everyone as though they were of worth.
44. Mack, *A Prince of Our Disorder*, 465.
45. This is not to suggest that promoting democracy as vigorously as Lansdale did is what the U.S. should always do. Far from it. But this is what his mission called for; this is also what local leaders sought. Also, though Lansdale was not a Lawrence in his approach to local culture, he showed a keen interest in whatever Filipinos were interested in. His natural curiosity, empathy, and the extent to which he treated everyone with respect won him more friends than any amount of prior scholarship could have. In an ideal world, of course, advisors should have both.
46. This also explains, in part, Lansdale's failure in Vietnam. Though some critics claim Lansdale mistakenly tried to apply the same cookie-cutter programs in Vietnam which had worked so well in the Philippines, the real problem was that he wouldn't compromise his beliefs about how to achieve democracy and security, and Diem wasn't sufficiently receptive. There is actually every indication that had he been able to convince Diem to do what had been done in the Philippines—namely, secure free and fair elections, professionalize the military, initiate land reform, and root out corruption—things might have turned out very differently.
47. Gerald Linderman, *The War Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 199.
48. Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987).
49. Johns, 33, reiterates the importance of this: "A sense of fairness (not equality) is critical. All members must perceive . . . that they are being treated fairly in terms of rights and obligations."
50. Matthews, 59.
51. Linderman, *The World Within War*, 227.
52. Of course, the more obvious—and significant—the division of labor is, the less noticeable hierarchy needs to be. Although this would seem to fly in the face of business models for teamwork, in which individuals are allowed (and even encouraged) to define their own roles, this describes SF teams. The weapons sergeants are weapons specialists, the communications sergeants are communications specialists. Everyone but the team captain plays a clear and significant role, which is not to say that captains can't or don't. But the fact that some NCOs consider officers superfluous, extraneous, and unnecessary on teams reveals how much is expected of them. To lead, officers had better add something. To convert potential critics into followers they must find a way to contribute to the good of the group, and they must do so even while proving themselves first among equals. Outside of combat, the fastest way to do this is by *being principled* and recognizing that it is a leader's duty to ensure principled behavior by, for, and from everyone.