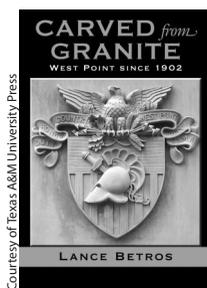


fields, who were also war veterans who had displayed an aptitude for instructing, taught their courses on a *primus inter pare* basis. In the course of map problems and war games, students would be asked to take over. The real point is that alternative student solutions were actively sought in the realization that insistence upon an approved or school solution might inhibit creativity and imagination. Muth says, “The heritage and idea of the officer remained the same until 1942.”

Albert Wedemeyer, who attended the *Kriegsakademie* in the 1930s, said that even on a bus with students returning to Berlin from a field exercise, the officer in charge would suddenly say, “Wedemeyer, *Lagebeurteilung!*” That is, what is your estimate of the situation? Recently one hears that called situational awareness. Muth points out that in the US Army before World War II, only at George C. Marshall’s Infantry School at Fort Benning were such methods used.

The book is based upon Muth’s Ph.D. dissertation submitted at the University of Utah in 2010. Writing in his second language, he is blunt and absolutely lucid in his conclusions. The source of his doctorate and incendiary style suggest that he did not find the German academic community congenial. American military professionals may be offended by the bluntness, but your reviewer strongly recommends the careful study of *Command Culture*.



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Carved from Granite: West Point Since 1902

by Lance Betros

Reviewed by Cole C. Kingseed, COL (USA Retired)

In a popular vignette surrounding the fiftieth anniversary of West Point’s fabled Class of 1915, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower turned to his classmate Omar Bradley and reportedly stated that West Point had not changed in the half century since their graduation. Ike was wrong. West Point had changed and it had changed significantly in the fifty years since he and Brad had graduated. Changes in virtually every area of cadet development had transformed the institution in ways that “the class the stars fell on” would never have envisioned.

After two centuries of existence, the mission of the United States Military Academy remains fixed and foremost—to prepare leaders of character for service as commissioned officers in the United States Army. Since its founding in 1802, thousands of West Point graduates have secured the Military Academy’s reputation as one of the foremost leader development institutions in the world. In *Carved from Granite*, BG Lance Betros (USA Retired) takes on a formidable challenge—to determine how effectively West Point has accomplished this mission of developing leaders of character over the course of the last century. Though his observations may run counter to the prevailing wisdom surrounding the Military Academy’s senior leadership, both past and

present, Betros deserves kudos for confronting the problems that he perceives are hindering West Point's full potential.

Betros is no stranger to West Point history. A West Point graduate from the Class of 1977 and former chairman of the Military Academy's Department of History, Betros served as editor of *West Point, Two Centuries and Beyond* (McWhiney Foundation Press, 2004). The twenty-four essays in that volume convinced Betros that continuity—not change—dominated West Point and the Corps of Cadets during the Academy's first two centuries of existence. Additional research focusing exclusively on West Point since 1902 has caused Betros to revise his earlier assessment.

The result is a *tour de force*—an outstanding example of historical research, interpretation, and fair-minded analysis intended “to prod the institution to confront issues that have gone unresolved for too long” in order for West Point to continue its heritage of producing the best possible military officers for the nation. Betros's brilliantly researched analysis demonstrates conclusively that change, not continuity, best describes the history of West Point since the centennial.

The author wastes no time in addressing the central problems that he views currently confront the Military Academy as it enters its third century. Betros states emphatically that West Point remains a premier leadership institution, but “the carved-from-granite exterior belies the growing problems within.” Throughout its history, West Point has been most successful when its leaders “focused on character and intellect as the preeminent developmental goals for cadets; conversely, the institution experienced the greatest difficulties when its leaders gave unwarranted priority to other, less important goals.”

In analyzing the transformation of the Military Academy over the last century, Betros organizes individual chapters along thematic lines. Following an introduction describing the popular image of the traditional West Point, he dedicates a chapter each to governance, admissions, academics, military training, the physical fitness program (including intercollegiate athletics), leader development, and character building. The concluding chapter, which Betros describes as subjective and interpretive, suggests ways of improving the institution. Informative appendices and one hundred pages of detailed notes further enhance the text.

As he examines the changes in West Point's academic, military, and physical programs over the past half century, Betros sees many positive trends that have advanced the cadets' intellectual growth and physical development. The culture of positive leadership and a comprehensive program of instruction in honor, respect, and professional ethics that now characterize the Military Academy contributed to the development of more well-rounded officers. Betros assigns high marks to reforms in the admission process that succeeded in raising the overall quality of the Corps of Cadets, though important improvements are necessary for West Point to reach its full potential.

Betros is less sanguine about systemic problems that have grown increasingly worse in the aftermath of the 1976 cheating incident. According

to the author, “These problems, most evident in the areas of governance, admissions, and intercollegiate athletics, have blurred the Academy’s focus on character and intellect as the key developmental goals.” Such observations will surely generate a great deal of controversy and will most probably result in a highly emotional response from West Point’s institutional hierarchy and among the Military Academy’s Association of Graduates.

Of the three most pressing problems facing West Point today, Betros opines that the heightened emphasis on intercollegiate athletics may be the most dangerous and most difficult problem to solve. According to the author, the “win-at-all cost” mentality to field competitive teams not only has caused incongruity in the admissions system, but it has resulted in a diversion of Academy resources in areas tangential to West Point’s core mission of providing the Army with strong and capable leaders of character. Furthermore, he posits that intercollegiate athletics have assumed a level of importance that undermine institutional priorities and lessens the overall quality of the Corps of Cadets. Such opinions will hardly endear Betros to the Military Academy’s Association of Graduates or Department of Intercollegiate Athletics.

Despite a few misgivings in the direction West Point is now tending, Betros concludes his analysis with an optimistic tone. Noting that the Academy’s greatest leaders have always been those who understood that West Point’s past success was due to graduates who viewed leadership “a lot more art than science,” there is no surer way to produce even better officers in the future than to focus intensely on character and intellect as the most important developmental goals. Future leaders, Betros urges, would do well to follow their example.