

## The Centurion Mindset and the Army's Strategic Leader Paradigm

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**ABSTRACT:** Army culture does not currently value or incentivize education and broadening for senior leaders, as it did prior to 1950. Various structural factors, such as the creation of a mega-bureaucracy, co-equal service branches, and a fixation with tactics, have contributed to the decline in numbers of educated and broadened leaders in the molds of Generals Pershing, MacArthur, and Eisenhower. The Army's strategic performance since the Korean War is symptomatic of this cultural decline.

On October 12, 1972, General Creighton Abrams became Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), a promotion that symbolized the further devaluation of broadly educated leaders in favor of tactically minded “centurions.” Centurions in the Roman legions, combining the command authority of a contemporary company commander with the experience of a sergeant major who directed tactics. Superior legates or generals orchestrated campaigns to achieve Rome's strategic objectives.<sup>1</sup> Abrams epitomized the tactically centered centurion paradigm, and it is no small irony the US main battle tank bears his name. In his mold, well-meaning but misguided Army leaders of the post-World War II era, have championed tactical career progression that stunted officer strategic broadening, and ensured the rise of centurions often incapable of performing as true “generalists.” The institution's transition from valuing an officer career path that produced sufficiently developed leaders helped birth the so-called training revolution, which Abrams and like-minded leaders enshrined. These men sought to ensure “no more Task Force Smiths” would occur, referring to an untrained and under-equipped Army task force that North Korean tanks rolled over in 1950.

This simplistic “lesson” still resonates within the Department of the Army, which recently opted to preserve brigade readiness at the expense of middle-management at headquarters, ignoring the likelihood Task Force Smith was symptomatic of overall institutional decline.<sup>2</sup> General William DuPuy's view of the quintessential Army leader was molded as a junior officer who experienced an earlier version of Task Force Smith

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1 Adrian Keith Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War, 100 BC—AD 200* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Publishers, 1996), 31-36. While the article's content and errors remain mine, I want to thank Dr. John A. Bonin for suggesting the centurion analogy, as well as Dr. Larry Tritle, Dr. Edward Gutierrez, Dr. Leonard Wong, LTC Mike Shekleton, MAJ Rob Grenier, and LTC Donald Travis for their assistance with this article.

2 This included Corps HQs, which then CSA General Joe Lawton Collins rapidly increased from one to eight by summer 1951. James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Directives the First Year* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1992), 30, 64, 72, for some of the corps. Unit histories contains Corps activation dates.

in the days following the Normandy invasion.<sup>3</sup> DuPuy later became the architect of Abrams' tactical colossus.

Fixation on tactics instead of strategy reflected the searing of dangerous World War II combat experiences into DuPuy, Abrams, General William Westmoreland, and others of their generation. Dispassionate analysis, however, informed but not overcome by experience, often occurs only at a safe distance from the subject matter at hand, and these leaders seemed incapable of distinguishing institutional maintenance from individual combat. Experiences such as those of Dupuy do have some merit, revealing how insufficient tactical preparedness led to unnecessary casualties in America's first battles and beyond.<sup>4</sup> The choice of developing strategic thinkers is not a zero-sum game with tactical wherewithal, however, as Army formations must also maintain tactical effectiveness. The shift to a centurion paradigm has come at a cost.

### The Army's Tactical Paradigm

In some ways, the battlefield-dominant US Army created by these men has become a more ethical version of the Wehrmacht, which the institution intentionally sought to emulate in the years after WWII. The Army has developed a force capable of winning nearly every firefight, while simultaneously blunting its development of strategic leaders. The outcomes of wars clearly rest on more than military strategy. Factors such as poor policy, enemy efficiency and will, resources, and luck also affect outcomes. However, the Army's painfully obvious inability to achieve national objectives since the Korean War against the likes of the Islamic State of the Levant (ISIL), the Taliban, Iraqi and Somali insurgents, and the North Vietnamese Army, reveals an institution in need of reform.<sup>5</sup> The debate over these failures has centered on martial frameworks such as counterinsurgency versus conventional operations and AirLand Battle doctrines.<sup>6</sup> Elevating the discourse above the operational and tactical levels of war, Army leaders must demote the centurion mentality in favor of a model better reflective of the institution's diverse past, while retaining the best of the tactical revolution. A comparison of the pedigrees of the Chiefs of Staff of the Army (CSAs) before and after 1950 demonstrates the transformation to a centurion-led Army that has ultimately undermined the institution's ability to contribute to the achievement of national objectives.

The lack of military success during a time of American technological and training advantages indicates the shortcomings of US Army culture.<sup>7</sup> While Brian Linn, Tom Ricks, and others have commented on the Army's strategic inability, none has tied it to the decline of officer

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3 Thomas E. Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), 244.

4 Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft, eds., *America's Fist Battles, 1776-1965* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), x-xi.

5 For example see, H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), which indicts senior civilian and military officials for the Vietnam crisis.

6 This debate is well-documented and includes writings by Peter Mansoor, Andrew Birtle, John Nagl, David Kilcullen, Gian Gentile, and others. For a useful summary see, Matthew Morton, "Learning from the Past, Looking To the Future," *Parameters* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 53-67.

7 Culture is defined here as the officer corps' beliefs, perceptions, experiences, and capabilities.

broadening and structural factors.<sup>8</sup> The post-Vietnam era also witnessed the rise of management science in American society. This societal transformation contributed to an Army institutional shift from valuing broadly educated and experienced strategic thinkers, to parochial, tactical, and technical centurions.<sup>9</sup> The creation of the Department of Defense in the aftermath of WWII weakened the Army's ability to formulate strategy by rendering the institution a co-equal service branch, while interposing unnecessary bureaucracy between top generals and the US president.

Bureaucrats have ascended within this structure, while the Army has become anti-intellectual.<sup>10</sup> Ricks' assertion the Army must relieve more generals for ineffectiveness would fail to address this underlying centurion problem, as replacements spawn from the same culture.<sup>11</sup> The Army's anti-intellectual bent also suggests advanced degrees are irrelevant to warfare; no current four-star generals have doctorate degrees, only one maintains a masters from a top-tier civilian university, and only one serving lieutenant general holds a PhD.<sup>12</sup> These numbers would disappoint reform-minded leaders such as Major General (ret. and former commandant of the US Army War College) Robert Scales, who has encouraged the intellectual development of Army leaders.<sup>13</sup>

While simply promoting leaders with advanced degrees to the highest levels will not guarantee success, officers broadly educated can better inform strategic discourse, having had their intellectual abilities expanded to think deeply and widely about complex issues. It is fashionable for government agencies to lament a seemingly complex operating environment (an ahistorical assertion)—should Army leaders not have the education to grapple with such complexity? A centurion's tactical acumen might mold a foundation for higher leadership, but it is not a prerequisite for strategic ability.

Since Vietnam, the Chiefs of Staff of the Army have generally been less broadened, and more tactically minded, than at any other time since the emergence of the United States as a world power during the Spanish-American War (1898). Tactical expertise now represents the current promotion paradigm, while the career of Dwight Eisenhower, a distinguished Chief of Staff of the Army and President, exemplifies a less flashy archetype. Without WWI combat experience, "Ike" today would remain non-promoted to lieutenant colonel. So would CSA Omar

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8 Brian Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 7-8; and Ricks, *The Generals*, 458.

9 Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Reconsidering the American Way of War* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 135,140, highlights Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's attempted use of management science; and Linn, *The Echo of Battle*, 7, describes a "hero" class of officers as tending towards "warrior" status and anti-intellectualism.

10 Charles D. Allen and George J. Woods, "Developing Army Enterprise Leaders," *Military Review* 95, no. 4 (July-August 2015): 42-49.

11 Ricks, *The Generals*, 451-453.

12 US Department of the Army, "General Officer Management Course," <https://www.gomo.army.mil/Ext/Portal/Officer/OfficerResume>. A Department of the Army preliminary study indicated that only 1/7 BGs (2011 class, courtesy Robert Grenier) received graduate education at civilian institutions, and only two attended top-tier universities. US Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, DA Pam 600-3 (Washington, DC: US Department of the Army, 2014) defines broadening as any billet not considered necessary for future command.

13 Robert H. Scales, "Too Busy to Learn," *United States Naval Institute. Proceedings* 136, no. 2 (February 2010): 30-35.

Bradley, who wintered WWI in Minnesota. Ike and Bradley performed well in WWII without combat experience. Not all WWI “slick sleeves” followed suit, however, as General Lloyd Fredendall, a highly regarded pre-war trainer and II Corps Commander at Kasserine Pass (1942) badly mangled the battle. Ike ultimately relieved him of duty.<sup>14</sup> The cases of Ike, Bradley, and Fredendall indicate that combat experience and pre-war training may be desirable, but are unnecessary for adequate performance. In 1943, the majority of the Army’s “elite” senior leadership lacked combat experience prior to that conflict.<sup>15</sup>

Tactical expertise, when confronted with an irregular enemy and conditions not resembling the sands of the National Training Center (NTC), has proven insufficient much like the case of training expert Fredendall. Training centers, such as the National Training Center, not only molded these leaders’ Army credentials, but their view of war as a limited conventional engagement, necessarily bounded in time and space by the astrategic parameters of the training area, and “won” by maneuver and overwhelming firepower.<sup>16</sup> Army officer evaluations once noted how many rotations officers performed “in the box,” and books on “winning” National Training Center were widely read in Army circles, as opposed to studying actual American battles.<sup>17</sup> Rigorous tactical training has better prepared soldiers for first battles to prevent Task Force Smiths. However, this training renaissance has not been complemented by strategic rebirth.

Historian Peter Mansoor, a former brigade commander and General David Petraeus’ executive officer during the “surge,” demonstrates how in the early years of the second Iraq War, Generals John Abizaid (Central Command or CENTCOM) and George Casey (Multi-National Force Iraq) simply did not grasp the situation. Both made decisions counter to the ways in which the “surge” later pacified the country long enough to return it to Iraqi security forces, though as ISIL is proving, not long enough.<sup>18</sup> Ricks maintains Generals Tommy Franks (CENTCOM) and Rick Sanchez (Commander, Combined Joint Task Force-7) previously had understood the situation in Iraq even less.<sup>19</sup>

The post-Vietnam training revolution prepared leaders for tactical conditions against Soviet-style forces, but as a byproduct, raised battle success to the level of strategy. It also downplayed education at the expense of training. As Ricks notes “...training tends to prepare one for known problems, while education better prepares one for the unknown, the unpredictable, and the unexpected.”<sup>20</sup> The Army desperately sought *raison d’être* after defeat in Vietnam, as well as a firm budgetary basis

14 Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Henry and Hold Company, 2002), 272, 399-400.

15 Walter Millis, *These are the Generals* in Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1971), 160.

16 Ricks, *The Generals*, 349-350, and Linn, *The Echo of Battle*, 216, make similar points.

17 Conversation with Dr. John A. Bonin, Professor of Concepts and Doctrine, US Army War College, June 2015, detailing his officer evaluation reports. There is a cottage industry of non-academic books about “winning” at the NTC, such as: Adela Frame and James W. Lussier, *66 Stories of Battle Command* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2001); and James R. McDonough, *The Defense of Hill 781* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988).

18 Peter R. Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 32, 45-46, 179, 183, 262.

19 Ricks, *The Generals*, 418-419.

20 *Ibid.*, 419-420.

to achieve relevance. The training revolution provided both. Abrams and DePuy, despite warnings about the dumbing-down of officership, focused the Army on the tactical level of war.<sup>21</sup> Leaders with broadening limitations such as Franks, Sanchez, and Casey, have risen within this culture. The performance of a well-educated Abizaid demonstrated broadening is not a silver bullet, however, and training should not be ignored while officers simply attend Harvard. As with Abizaid, leaders sometimes operate on false assumptions (or the enemy gets it right). Yet tactical obsession, with the advent of training center rotations as the pinnacle of Army command has weakened the proclivity for strategic thought. This paradigm emerged, in part, as a misnomer about G.I. battlefield performance in WWII.

S.L.A Marshall's (and others) inaccurate assessments of US Army battlefield performance, as well as German generals' ingratiating accounts of their own successes against the Soviets, created the erroneous idea that the German army outfought the Americans.<sup>22</sup> A telling WWII German intelligence report around the time of the struggle for Aachen, however, rated US divisions highly.<sup>23</sup> The Wehrmacht did fight well at the tactical level throughout the war, but poor strategy and an inclination toward committing atrocities doomed its efforts—in some ways a parallel with Army failures since 1965.<sup>24</sup> The misnomer of US forces fighting less well seeped into late-1940s Army doctrine as the institution prepared to fight the emerging Soviet threat, and vestiges of this focus on Wehrmacht success in battles survives today.<sup>25</sup> It also assisted in generating the training revolution.

Army victory in Panama, the Gulf War, and the opening stages of Afghanistan and Iraq seemingly proved Abrams' training revolution successful. The seeds of tactical success sprouted strategic disaster, however, as the Army found itself unable to grapple with strategy. Hence the debate over counterinsurgency operations has dominated military discourse from before the "Surge." This situation also reflected the larger American cultural prominence of technocrats. A recent article

21 Ibid., 346-347, Ricks at once criticizes the downplaying of education, while crediting DePuy with creating a better Army; and Suzanne C. Nielson, *An Army Transformed: The US Army's Post-Vietnam Recovery and the Dynamics of Change in Military Organizations*, Letort Paper (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, September 2010), 42-44, also indicates DePuy's tactical focus as necessary for the post-Vietnam Army.

22 S.L.A Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947); Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 1-15, discusses the historiography (including Marshall) of the pro-Wehrmacht and the pro-American arguments, while his book adds heft to the latter category. For inflated German accounts see B.H. Liddell Hart, *The German Generals Talk: Startling Revelations from Hitler's High Command* (New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1975 reprint of 1948).

23 Mansoor, *GI Offensive*, 197.

24 For Wehrmacht fighting cohesion see Kevin Farrell, "Culture of Confidence: The Tactical Excellence of the German Army of the Second World War," in *Leadership: The Warrior's Art*, ed. Christopher Kolenda (Carlisle, PA: The Army War College Foundation Press, 2001), 177-203. Unlike members of the Wehrmacht who perpetrated war crimes with the sanction of official policy, US Army personnel sometimes committed atrocities of their own volition in instances such as My Lai in Vietnam War and post-911 in the handling of prisoners such as at Abu Ghraib prison. Columbia Professor Adam Tooze's lecture to West Point history faculty connected US Army atrocities with the institution's focus on the Wehrmacht, US Military Academy, West Point, NY, Spring 2012.

25 Robert W. Hutchinson, "The Weight of History: Wehrmacht Officers, the US Army Historical Division, and US Military Doctrine, 1945-1956," *Journal of Military History*, 78, no. 4 (October 2014): 1321-1348. A recent Pentagon study also examined Wehrmacht replacement practices, email with US Department of the Army staff February-March 2014.

in *Military Review* highlights this emphasis in the Army by conflating managers with leaders, a tradition emerging with the “Whiz Kids” of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s reign.<sup>26</sup> An emphasis on techno-bureaucracy obscures the larger issue of strategic failure, which efficient management will not ameliorate.

The rise of civilian managers in the Department of Defense, like McNamara and Donald Rumsfeld, and an emphasis on equality between the services, resulted in the structural demotion of senior Army leaders. General George Marshall, for instance, served as chief military advisor with unfettered access to President Franklin D. Roosevelt in WWII.<sup>27</sup> Reorganizations such as the *National Security Acts* of 1947 and 1949, and *Goldwater-Nichols* of 1986 created unnecessary bureaucracy between senior generals and the president, as well as demoted the Army’s influence to an equal footing with the other services. This relegation to equal status occurred even as the Army served as the nation’s strategic force, shouldering the majority burden of war efforts in personnel, logistics (including support to the other services), and casualties.<sup>28</sup> Although the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), serves as the President’s chief military advisor, the position rotates between services and is a staff billet without authority in the way that WWII (and prior) Army Chiefs of Staff and generals of the army exercised prerogatives. These structural changes diminished the Army’s strategic influence on US policy, and failures in many ground wars since 1945 indicates the nation is not better for it. Other Army structural changes set in motion months before the Korean War accelerated the shift in institutional culture from strategy to tactics.

The Cold War reversed the United States’ traditional military cycle of rapidly expanding Army ranks with draftees and then precipitously demobilizing them following victory.<sup>29</sup> Government officials perceived a worldwide Communist threat that required a standing military, particularly a large conventional Army. These attitudes, encapsulated in George Kennan’s “Long Telegram” and Winston Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech, coalesced in *National Security Memorandum 68* (NSC-68), which President Harry Truman only endorsed after the North’s invasion of South Korea.<sup>30</sup> This invasion confirmed perceptions of global communism and resulted in a permanently large Army. It also contributed to the eventual subjugation of strategy to tactics.

Army promotion soon became linked to the command of standing units, the vast majority of which operated below the strategic level. This linkage contributes to the development of an astrategic officer corps, in which some officers may disbelieve military leaders have a role

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26 Allen and Woods, “Developing Army Enterprise Leaders;” and Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 121.

27 *Ibid.*, 26-27, for no barrier between the Chief and the President.

28 *Ibid.*, 62, on equalizing the services, *Ibid.*, 64-65, on elevating civilian secretaries; *Ibid.*, 303, for Goldwater-Nichols increasing the role of Chairman at the expense of the service Chiefs; see Army Support of Other Services, US Department of the Army, *Theater Army, Corps, and Division Operations*, FM 3-94 (Washington, DC: US Department of the Army, 2014), for current Army support.

29 Jason W. Warren, ed., *Drawdown: The American Way of Postwar* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2016).

30 For these Cold War issues see, John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

in formulating military strategy. Antulio Echevarria's *Reconsidering the American Way of War* rightly posits US strategy, in fact, connects political goals with national strategies, and thus the "American Way of War" is not astrategic at the national level.<sup>31</sup> A strategic fissure has emerged, however, between the national level and Army entities responsible for fashioning strategy. Army culture prior to *National Security Memorandum 68* received a boost in strategic emphasis, in the interwar years for instance, where officership revolved around education and broadening, even including discussions of strategy in officers' messes. The officer corps more readily resisted a tactical mindset with few troops available to command during these lean personnel years.<sup>32</sup>

The tactical dominion eventually became king of the realm for post-Korean War promotion, which the training revolution elevated to the throne. Summer 2004 in Iraq found Casey upon a tide of sinking strategy and he believed the war was lost before Petraeus temporarily righted the ship.<sup>33</sup> Petraeus' surge of forces was but a current of success upon an ocean of failure. Petraeus' preference for well-educated subordinates and officer broadening soon receded with his departure to the CIA, in an Army culture hostile to non-tactical endeavors. In addition to Petraeus other generals bucked the centurion trend including, Alexander Haig (SACEUR and Secretary of State), Frederick Woerner (US Southern Command), and more recently, Daniel Bolger (NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan), but in insufficient numbers. Casey, himself son of a general who was killed in Vietnam, had limited broadening. He became Chief of Staff of the Army after his tour in Iraq. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld summoned Casey's predecessor General Peter Schoomacher off the retirement bench as a swipe at senior Army generals to replace the marginalized General Eric Shinseki. Schoomacher's career was mainly focused on special operations. Shinseki himself completed a masters degree and then taught at West Point before returning to a predominantly tactically focused career. General Raymond Odierno, replacing Casey in 2011, had commanded effectively at the operational level of war in Iraq, but maintained a background similar to his predecessors. His term as CSA eventually originated a number of programs, however, that may bear strategic fruit, if continued.

The post-911 Chiefs of Staff of the Army generally share a lack of graduate education and broadening with their Vietnam War counterparts. Neither Westmoreland nor Abrams achieved advanced degrees and both served in mainly tactical billets.<sup>34</sup> Although America's Abrams tank was aptly named for the general, headquarters staffs he worked to reduce would be less well named. He began the short-sighted headquarters reductions that have become a characteristic of the post-Vietnam Army. This reduction came at the moment sociologist Morris Janowitz noted that the backgrounds of successful WWII generals were different from those of the post-1950 era, the latter of which elevated tactical assignments as the "ideal" career progression. According to Janowitz's

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31 Echevarria, *Reconsidering the American Way of War*, 165-167.

32 Michael Matheny, "When the Smoke Clears: The Interwar Years as an Unlikely Success Story," in Warren, ed., *Drawdown*.

33 Mansoor, *Surge*.

34 Westmoreland attended Harvard Business School for only a year and completely lacked professional military school attendance after West Point.

analysis, “ranking military leaders displayed an early and persistent propensity for staff work.”<sup>35</sup> Abrams’ training revolution did bear fruit in early battles in the 1980s and beyond, and the Army should maintain its best practices, but must also emphasize strategic leader development.

Abrams was the embodiment of the shift to the centurion motif, serving in successive tactical positions, with a telling break only to teach tactics at the Armor School at Ft. Knox, and later returning as Chief of Staff, Armor Center. Recent scholarship indicates Abrams’ vaunted role in Vietnam was less successful than previously accepted, as he simply advanced programs enacted by Westmoreland.<sup>36</sup> Abrams’ distaste for headquarters personnel with the simultaneous deification of command billets institutionalized an attitude that smaller staffs can accomplish the mission while maintaining the contradiction that officers manning them are less capable than those on track to command soldiers. Some senior generals confuse poor intra-headquarters leadership and non-broadened and inexperienced staff with headquarters bloat, eliminating the very force structure history has repeatedly demonstrated is necessary for sustained land combat.<sup>37</sup> Robust headquarters, besides acting as a unit’s intellectual center, provide broadening and serve as opportunities for officers between line billets and educational and professional development assignments. Army leaders have ineptly continued Abrams’ programs, and ironically so, as much as the US Army has sought to ape the Germans.

The great general staff, the elite organization in the Prussian-German armed forces, undergirded German tactical prowess. It was instrumental in the unification of Germany under a Prussian ruler, and assisted the Second Reich in dominating the European continent from 1866-1918 and again under the Third Reich from 1938 to 1944.<sup>38</sup> Adolf Hitler increasingly usurped the staff’s power and eventually neutered it, as many American generals have done to Army headquarters since Vietnam. The US Army fetishized the wrong aspect of the German army.<sup>39</sup>

The Army institution has largely failed to achieve strategic results under the direction of the CSAs after the Korean War. There is no denying the dedication of these officers, and like Shinseki, some bled for their country. It would also represent a shallow argument to lay the failure of national strategy at the feet of the CSAs or any commander. Failure has reflected structural paradigm shifts, as well as the influence of domestic politics. The profiles of the CSAs in a hierarchical organization like the Army, however, offer a swampy view into the larger institutional strategic morass. A comparison of the backgrounds of CSAs before WWII reveals an earlier crop of strategically broadened officers.

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35 Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 166.

36 Gregory Daddis, *Westmoreland’s War: Reassessing American Strategy in Vietnam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

37 Conrad Crane and John A. Bonin, “The Next Task Force Smith: The Danger of Arbitrary Headquarters Reductions,” *War on the Rocks*, October 27, 2015.

38 For the rise and effectiveness of the German General Staff see, Geoffrey Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 73-123.

39 The Command and General Staff College in its military history block on the German Wars of unification does not mention the German staff, Academic Year 2012-2013, Phase II, accessed September 2015.



## An Earlier Tradition of Broadening

John Schofield, who commanded a division at Gettysburg and became general of the army (the office prior to CSA) for the lengthy period of 1888-1895, influenced the Army as the United States emerged as a world power. Schofield was Superintendent of West Point for five years. He previously taught “natural and experimental philosophy” (physics) at the Academy (also for five years) and later physics at Washington University. Besides his division, corps, and Department of North Carolina (reconstruction) commands, Schofield served “as a confidential diplomatic emissary to France,” and deployed on “special mission” to Hawaii.<sup>40</sup> Schofield’s educational and broadening assignments were not unique for leading Army officers of this period. Educated in part by a French officer in Massachusetts before the Civil War, and wounded four times in it, General Nelson Miles also commanded the reconstruction of North Carolina, and later defeated Indian resistance to white expansion. He observed the Greek-Turkish War, and Russian, German, and French maneuvers, and then commanded US efforts in Puerto Rico. Miles published three books, two while General of the Army. This highlights the cultural shift to anti-intellectualism at the highest ranks, as a former Army commander of the war in Afghanistan counseled that leaders risked promotion by publishing.<sup>41</sup>

The first CSA, General Samuel Young, established professional education at Ft. Leavenworth and served as first president of the Army War College. The fourth CSA, General James Bell studied law and was admitted to the bar, while teaching at Southern Illinois University. Bell’s successor General Leonard Wood was a Medical Doctor, studying at Harvard Medical School and Boston City Hospital. His replacement General William Wotherspoon who served three years in the Navy, taught at Rhode Island College and the General Staff College, and was also president of the US Army War College, transforming it into an independent educational institution.

General Tasker Bliss’s career was a mixture of education, broadening, and, like his predecessors, line assignments. These included French and artillery instructor at West Point; adjutant of the Artillery School at Ft. Monroe; recorder on the Board on Interior Waterways; instructor Naval War College; military attaché to Spain; collector of customs in Havana and president of the commission to revise the Cuban tariff; Governor of Moro Province, Philippines; twice President of the US Army War College; and after his tour as CSA, a delegate to the Paris Peace Conference. Given his broadening experiences, one might imagine Bliss succeeding in “Phase 4” operations in Iraq. Again highlighting a centurion mindset, the Army has transformed service as Superintendent of West Point or the Commandant of the US Army War College as a retirement billet instead of an opportunity for broadening (General Malin Craig in 1935 went from Commandant of the US Army War College directly to Chief of Staff of the Army). General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing, best known as commander of the Mexican Punitive Expedition and

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40 William G. Bell, *Commanding Generals and Chiefs of Staff: Portraits & Biographical Sketches* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2010), 90, for further biographical information herein on Generals of the Army and Chiefs of Staff see pages 90-168.

41 Basic Strategic Arts Program, US Army War College lecture, Winter 2014 (non-attribution).

American Expeditionary Forces in France, also performed in a number of educational and broadening posts. These comprised obtaining a law degree while professor of military science and tactics at the University of Nebraska; the Bureau of Insular Affairs when serving in the Office of Assistant Secretary of War, an headquarters billet which he created, unlike modern CSAs who rashly reduce headquarters; military attaché to Japan; observer of the Russo-Japanese War, and like Bliss, Governor of Moro Province.

In addition to his legendary career in both World Wars and Korea, General Douglas MacArthur served as aide to President Theodore Roosevelt from 1906-1908, service school instructor at Ft. Leavenworth, and Superintendent of West Point before becoming CSA. Although some detest MacArthur for “flamboyant” tendencies, he was one of the best military minds of his generation, conducting one of the “twin drives” in the Pacific theater of WWII with limited resources and joint forces across large geographic areas, as he later did at Inchon in Korea.<sup>42</sup> Eisenhower served on MacArthur’s staff in the Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Philippines. Ike was extensively educated in Army schools, including Leavenworth, the US Army War College, and the Army Industrial College, while also serving as an instructor at Leavenworth before his illustrious career in WWII and beyond. The careers of Bradley, Marshall, and others reflect the broadening paradigm of a past Army generation that achieved strategic results. In an era before the proliferation of graduate degrees, the education of these leaders was exceptional.

### A Way Ahead

Instead of maintaining its post-1950 centurion trend, the Army must develop and promote broadened leaders in the vein of those like Schofield and Eisenhower to CSA or Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the latter position of which an Army officer must occupy during major ground wars. The caprices of victory are not subject to the politically correct whims of service equality. These officers would foster a professional intellectual climate by emphasizing education and broadening. Odierno began this initiative with programs such as the Strategic Broadening Program and Army Strategic Planning and Policy Program, but these have been implemented in haphazard fashion and should be expanded and elevated intellectually as a post-Leavenworth offering for promising mid-grade officers. The Army should proliferate officer education programs such as the US Army War College’s Basic and Advanced Strategic Arts Programs that educate strategists and colonels, adding two levels of these courses for junior and senior general officers. The Army must make a clear distinction between education and training, which its bureaucracy and attendant budget practices often conflate.<sup>43</sup>

These initiatives are inexpensive. For the production and maintenance cost of one F-35 fighter, the Army could educate most Active and Reserve Components officers. Every mid-grade officer should receive at

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42 Ricks, *The Generals*, 197; also Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) are critical of MacArthur.

43 For example, the US Army War College recently reported to Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), and Army educational programs are funded with training in the same budgetary category.

least a masters degree at a well-regarded civilian institution. This serves not only the personal development of the officer and the intellectual foundation of the institution, but to influence civilian peers and relate the Army story.<sup>44</sup> An emphasis on education during drawdowns and after major conflicts would not constitute an original program, as the Army concentrated its meager resources on education between World Wars.<sup>45</sup>

To not only right the ship but keep it afloat, the Army must undertake a comprehensive strategic study of not only the past 14 years, but also the post-draft era.<sup>46</sup> Recommendations should include structural changes to prioritize Army prerogatives as the lead service for major land conflicts, and reduce the barriers that allowed business-minded strategic amateurs such as McNamara and Rumsfeld to interdict military recommendations of the institution's senior leaders to the President.

The tradition that preceded *National Security Memorandum 68* is one of a cadre Army, while also maintaining a varying quantity of a professional force. Facing current manning constraints, the Army should return to a cadre force that would also provide adequate opportunities for broadening assignments of the kind the CSAs before Vietnam experienced, without these assignments prejudicing career progression. In a large-scale crisis, the cadre from the training base would serve as leadership for new battalions with the Reserve Component assuming training duties. The emphasis on training should be maintained for remaining units, which the extra number of non-commissioned officers and officers from cadre units would rotate to fill after broadening assignments. Training emphasis should be expanded for echelons above corps.<sup>47</sup>

The Army must rebuild its headquarters where broadened officers would help guide strategic decision-making. In the tradition that Abrams accelerated, the institution reduced the wrong headquarters, forcing division and corps headquarters to cover the shortfall. Division and corps staffs are poor substitutes for the theater level because of experience and rank disparities. The obvious solution was to maintain theater army headquarters at strength and appropriate grade level. Combining US Forces Command (FORSCOM) with US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), as well as reducing Medical Command would have allowed the 25 percent reduction to remain in place without compromising warfighting headquarters, as well as those performing critical "Phase 0" activities like security cooperation and "setting the theater."

FORSCOM and TRADOC were created in the early 1970s to replace US Continental Army Command (CONARC), and this arrangement has outlived its usefulness and furthered the centurion paradigm. A return to the CONARC model would help balance the Army's training priorities, and serve as a conduit for better Active and Reserve Components relations, as well as ease the raising of forces with an updated cadre system. McArthur formed the precursor of Continental Army Command when he "activated his 4-army structure in 1932," understanding solid

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44 Tim Kane, "Why Our Best Officers Are Leaving," *The Atlantic* 307, no. 1 (January/February 2011): 80-85.

45 Matheny, "When the Smoke Clears."

46 Ricks, *The Generals*, 455.

47 Cadre and other personnel issues are beyond the scope of this article, but worth noting in the context of broadening.

command and control required an extra layer of headquarters between corps commanders and the CSA.<sup>48</sup> He based this decision on the never enacted three field armies concept created by the 1920 *National Defense Act*.<sup>49</sup> Instead of the current bifurcated training system, where TRADOC is the proponent for individual training and FORSCOM oversees collective training at the training centers, a CONARC model would re-apply a regional approach to training management with three sub-command regional army commanders responsible for all training of both active and reserve territorial formations. TRADOC's and FORSCOM's staffs would merge, while TRADOC's three-star sub-commands would remain. Central Command would receive assignment of III Corps (FORSCOM must assign forces per Title 10 US Code para. 162), while CONARC would maintain XVIII Corps as the Global Response Force (GRF).<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusion

The Army must alter the gears of its personnel machine to produce the next generation of generals in the mold of Black Jack, Marshall, Ike, or the American Caesar, to improve the nation's chances of achieving its strategic objectives. Poor national policy or an implacable adversary may still overcome the best leaders' plans, but there is less chance of success without a deep bench of strategically capable generals. Demoting the centurion-focused Abrams' archetype to its proper place in the legion, the Army must merge its successful model for training with a renewed broadening program from yesteryear to develop strategic leaders and ultimately repair strategic capability. This will include advocating for the reduction of governmental structural barriers formed since WWII and the righting of poor institutional history, both of which have contributed to the Army's overly tactical focus. Cadre formations and reversed headquarters reductions with a return to CONARC will assist in the growth of a strategic culture. The Army must move beyond a simple debate over operational frameworks and take common sense and time-honored measures within current budget limitations to reform its internal culture and recreate an institution capable of conceiving of victory. Without leaders capable of developing an intellectual framework for winning, the Army will continue to produce disappointing results.

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48 Jean R. Moenk, *A History of Command and Control of Army Forces in the Continental United States, 1919-1972* (Fort Monroe, VA: Headquarters, United States Continental Army Command, 1972), 56.

49 Ibid.

50 A number of speakers at the USAWC have denigrated the CONARC template without distinguishing between a necessary, but poorly administered organization, and the model itself. Non-attributed guest speakers at the Basic Strategy Program Course, US Army War College, 2014-2015.