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Command Method: A Gap in Military Historiography

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The isolation of principles of military command method and style beyond that now extant might have the confining effect that doctrine often has. There may be danger implicit in trying to make seem certain those things that cannot be reduced to an abstract or predictable model. Perhaps command method must share with creativity and innovation a high tolerance for ambiguity.

COMMAND METHOD:

A GAP IN MILITARY HISTORIOGRAPHY

by

Roger A. Beaumont

> Examples from history make everything clear, and in addition they afford the most convincing kind of proof in the empirical fields of knowledge. This applies more to the art of war than anything else.[1]
>
> Perhaps a final and vital conclusion is that a prolonged peacetime service is not necessarily conducive for the preparation of military personnel for war.[2]

Description or discussion of command methods is relatively rare in military analysis. Military biography and operational history alike often focus on what happened or why, but rarely how. In current discussion on "C^3"—command, control and communications—technology and organization are dominant. In spite of the relegation of command method to marginality, the idea of military professionalism itself is based on the assumption that command method can be taught. Given the central focus on the *role* of command, method has received relatively little close analysis; one may ask why the actual method of command has been so casually treated.

Since the 17th century at least technologies of command, including organization, have been evolving ever more rapidly in scale and complexity. Turenne had maps, a personal and headquarters staff, housekeepers and aides-de-camp, telescopes and staff riders, reports from cavalry and spies, as well as pen and paper. Current command systems for far smaller forces than his include an array of general staff officers, specialized technicians, a headquarters complement, wireless and wire communications, computer and map displays, projectors, television and sensor linkages, typewriters, duplicating

equipment, infrared and standard photography, motorized and airborne reconnaissance, grease pencils, acetate, stereoptical viewers, photogrammetric and computer aids and much, much more.[3]

The role of the commander on the field and in the fleet, personally controlling a geometrically arranged human chess game, was changing from the late 17th century onward. In stages over the next three centuries, war on land, at sea, and eventually in the air was dispersed, moving away from linear form and toward what S.L.A. Marshall called "eddy currents of battle," in a fragmenting and scattering of operations, often out of touch with immediate central control and monitoring. Yet even though commanders were growingly removed from the zone of action, they continued to be held responsible within a framework based on the image of the *grand chef*. While Wellington, Napoleon, Alexander, Caesar, Bayard, Gustavus Adolphus, Cromwell, and Eugene shared danger on the field with their troops and were often splashed with blood or nicked by bullets, half a century later, in the Crimea, Napoleon III was commanding—or trying to command—by telegraph. In the American Civil War, the model of the tense map room and clicking telegraphs and the isolation of high command at the node of an electromechanical nervous system was established at the same time that, as Patton observed, modern battles had become "simply an agglomeration of numerous small actions . . . [that] practically never develop according to preconceived notions."[4]

The subsequent extension in space of the battlefield was accompanied by developments in communication and a staff system based on division of labor and consequent reduction of the administrative burdens of command.[5] Radio and airpower penalized the concentrating of headquarters as other factors seemed to demand it. From 1914 on, headquarters location became less and less easy to disguise because of electronic "signature," while investment in headquarters systems—communications equipment, manpower, defensive systems on the ground and in the air, camouflage and deception—continued to increase.[6] Since 1945 the special problems of nuclear weapons have added problems of control only partially offset by communications refinements, radar, and computers. Jamming, monitoring, codebreaking and new targetting systems also paralleled these changes, and from the First World War onward added new dimensions to the dynamics of battle to the point that damaging the electromechanical nervous system of the opposing force began to offer rewards greater than inflicting heavy casualties on his fighting units. Conversely, the rising importance of the "nervous system" created the need for new technologies and the people to man them. As the old image of linear battle was eroded by new weapons systems, communication technologies sometimes seemed to offer a chance for commanders to draw in the strings of "real-time," after watching them unravel for so long. Whether the effects of electromagnetic pulses and countermeasures would allow a conversion of the battlefield to an electronic chessboard is another question, one not different in essence from the quandaries that faced Halleck or von Schlieffen, but certainly different in degree of consequence. Indeed, the first command system that took account of communications technology, that of the Germans, accepted the problems of overload, dispersal and changing situation, through delegation of discretion to commanders in the form of the *Auftragbefehlsgebung*, "the issuance of executive orders related to a task"—as it still does.[7] Over time, however, attempts by military intellectuals and professionals to grapple with rational models of command and of warfare

have been infrequent and uneven. On the one hand, the attempts of the school of Jomini to develop a geometrical typology seem naive and ludicrous.[8] Such exercises in hyperrationalism (which are not lacking recent counterparts) seem quite a bit farther away from wisdom than do the more verbal and discursive works of Sun Tzu, de Saxe and von Clausewitz. The latter certainly chose a different path from that taken by Jomini when he described the essence of the commander's role in the age of expanding armies:

> the commander of a great mass finds himself in a constant surge of false and true information, of mistakes committed through fear, through negligence, or acts of disobedience, committed either from mistakes or indolence or exhaustion, of accidents which no mortal could have foreseen.... He is the victim of a hundred thousand impressions....[9]

Whether out of the awareness of the above effect, or through reflexive avoidance of a particularly complex aspect of military phenomenology, there is sparse treatment of command method in the general array of writing on strategy or war and what is there, unhappily, is sometimes a cardboard front for ideology.[10] Military history, journalism and fiction have, moreover, kept alive the image of the heroic leader standing as a rock above the command, using his will to influence events. If nothing else, such an image of individual control and responsibility may be attractive to those caught in the foils of an organizational society, to whom Lindbergh or Lawrence of Arabia symbolize the individual triumphant over fate. Such imagery, however, ignores the fact that the work involved in arraying details for decision-makers as well as implementing the execution has become the province of anonymous functionaries. Bureaucrats, politicians, captains of industry and commanders come and go, but the system has its momentum. Many of the popular heroes, real and fictional, of the late 19th and 20th centuries had as their stage of action the sea, the battlefield, the frontier, the sky and space—and sports—where the writ of complex organization runs thin. As with the definition of heroism, the perception of the role of *grand chef-Feldherr-Great Captain* is highly subjective. In lists of "all-time greats," Napoleon overshadows Wellington, Nelson and Blucher. Stonewall Jackson and Lee are virtual demigods relative to the Union victors, and Rommel has eclipsed Montgomery. What that is all about one may perhaps best leave to psychohistorians. Notably, in the Communist world, while there has been much deference to common denominators and group norms, e.g., commissars, indoctrination, and depersonalization of all but "maximum leaders," in the heat of battle clear rank symbols, decorations, and even bribes have been used to stimulate performance, in a kind of military piecework analogous to Stakhanovism.[11] One might well ask whether emphasis on idiosyncratic style and imagery among Western commanders does not reflect an assumption: that the soldier has a choice to make, and it is better to build his allegiance on the foundation of mystique, situational and immediate, than upon an ideology that might transcend the immediacy of war. Some might suggest that the early experience of the American Republic with its many general-presidents and that of a number of other nations runs counter to that assertion and that charisma is itself a potential ideology. The eagerness with which many modern political leaders have invested themselves with the trappings of military experience suggests that it is not an inconsiderable factor.

The image of an overweening personal power is the basis of most popular perceptions of war, e.g., "The Commanders" television series. Only

occasionally does one glimpse how ground, air and sea actions of the First and Second World Wars were actually being controlled by relatively junior officers in intermittent and confused communication with their "leaders," usually reporting after the fact. Combat became more fluid, diffuse and irregular in its form, many senior commanders attempted to exercise control in the manner of the Great Captains. In the Civil War, post-Napoleonic models of geometric warfare, filtered through Jomini, Dennis Hart Mahan and Halleck, led to costly slaughter as the variable equation of factors omitted the change factor of the rifle. In the First World War, the effect was even more pronounced as veterans of peacetime maneuvers and colonial wars grappled with the vast differences between battlefield reality and preconception.

The naval Battle of Jutland, for example, fought in late May 1916, dramatized the gap between the dispersal of the forces and the image of the *grand chef*. Indeed, results were hard to determine immediately. The British Grand Fleet's commander, Adm. Sir John Jellicoe, was castigated on a number of counts. In the years following the war, however, when the "word" got out regarding the deficiencies in British shell fuzing and other problems, Jellicoe's stock rose in professional circles. A "show" was held at the Royal Navy's Tactical School using ship models, slides showing visibility conditions on the flagship's bridge and a matched series of slides showing the message flow between Jellicoe and units engaged. Those who witnessed the display felt that there was little Jellicoe could have done beyond what he had done.[12] Nevertheless, the continuing vigor of the concept of command responsibility was implicit in the clash of factions that mushroomed after the fight, just as the Battle of the Memoirs overshadowed systemic analysis in the postmortems after the Second World War. Military organizations and the general public remained quick to assign blame. In view of this, even if quantitative indices of command effectiveness were developed, one could expect little agreement about the importance or the weighting of such figures, especially within the realm of military history where blame, glory and the adversary posture are so well-entrenched. If defeat and victory in themselves are not clear correlates to military reputation, why should one expect, say, "POWs taken-ground gained-enemy casualties versus friendly casualty ratio" to have much effect on the shaping of impression? Indeed, the dynamics of the leader/led relationship elude the seeker of simple explanation or rationalism.[13]

There is little wonder, given the focus of military historians and journalists on weapons and personalities, that the question of technique and method has been treated fragmentarily. The elusiveness of leadership predictability has also added to the problem, as the search for effective leadership and command models oscillates between personalities and systems.[14] No doubt the gamelike nature of tactics reviewed in tranquillity has also had an effect, as have the salability of topics, the availability of documents, and the politics of military analysis. It is easy enough to say, as many military historians have said, that there is no didactic value in military history, while persevering in research and analysis in a way that assures marginal utility, whether seen from the perspective of military utility or peace research. Moreover, aside from basic agreement on the need of professional leaders to master certain mechanical rudiments of their trade,[15] most social science analysis relative to the "art" of command falls short of precision and is not wisdom. The question may be seen as academic, of practical interest only to professionals, or merely an exercise in woolgathering. Yet beyond utility a major problem emerges

from the phenomenon of command method, that of error produced by scale. Has, for example, the increasing size and dispersion of conflict in terms of levels as well as the extension of actual combat in time and space created an unstable and error-loaded complex that in itself works against the broader use of force and coercion as effective instruments of policies?If, as Marxists purport, all acts are political, and if the Clausewitzian dictum that war is a continuation of policy by other means is valid, what does this portend for military–and political–leaders who have less and less relatively clear boundaries and formalism to aid them in determining when their actions are appropriate? The expansion of the staff model since 1941 to deal with psychological warfare, propaganda and civil affairs and military government, the institutionalization of paramilitary forces with a rather less than traditional outlook in the body military, and the experiences of Van Fleet, Templer and Westmoreland all underline the problem, as do the frustrations of some commanders of the old school, in facing a world of subtleties and weak boundary definitions. Beyond that, J.F.C. Fuller's observation that the Occidental symbol of war is a sword and the Oriental a bow, suggests a variant of the "constabulary" model in which greater tolerance for ambiguity is implicit. On the other hand, there is no clear evidence that evolution from the heroic to the professional will pause at a point where the values of professionalism and honor are foremost. A further stage of evolution might produce a refinement of Lord Wavell's ideal general with the instincts of a cat burglar. The skills involved in motivating and orchestrating people in war have often been transferred to politics, e.g., Napoleon, Ataturk, MacArthur, Eisenhower, de Gaulle and Mao. In spite of the symbolic aggression and drive implicit in the role of commander, as little of most officers' careers are spent in war, the shaping norm for outlook, style and habit is that of a bureaucracy. In many countries this not only means conforming to stringent economy, but enduring hostility or apathy on the part of the general society toward the role, opinion or welfare of military professionals. As Nevil Shute noted in *Slide Rule*, commenting on red tape in the Royal Navy in early World War II, virtues rewarded in peace are often antithetical to the drive and decisiveness at a premium in war. The sense of shared danger and purpose of those who serve in war is far different from that of those who enter and rise in peacetime, and the relationship of such variants to command style might well be worthy of further research.

In respect to such linkages to the realm of politics, command method is also related to headquarters ambience and therein further constitutes a blend of technique and of political behavior. It is a truism that stress alters perception and the ability to cope and react, but there are also other types of filters at work. Depersonalization is produced by distance between operations and the relatively pristine and relaxed and routine atmosphere of the headquarters. John Masters, a novelist who served in the Indian Army, has related how he visualized a Gurkha rifleman when drafting orders in order to keep his perspective on the consequence in human terms of whatever lofty plans he might concoct at the staff level.[16] Technology has created a growing detachment of higher headquarters from the fighting zone and even though anecdotes of command error, misperception, arrogance and foolishness abound, there has been little recognition of the way in which that detachment has shaped expectancies or doctrine up and down the chain of command. Experiments underlining the ease with which individuals adapt to group norms may or may not be relevant to the question, but there is

no question that the environment of headquarters often cancels the bond between leaders and led that exists at the operational level. There is, moreover, an implication in the creation of the command structure that because something is created to do something that it must therefore do something; hence the sense of relief that comes with having suspense and ambiguity resolved, and the rise in morale among diplomatic as well as military functionaries during the initial stages of a crisis.[17] In such cases, the hunger for resolving action may be viewed less as a function of professionalization, or as a function of the exercise of power, as a reaction to protracted tension.[18]

On the other hand, if one considers the question of ambience from the standpoint of industrial engineering one might ask how much the command-staff system (in terms of work environment, personnel selection, training and the technologies of information handling) has come into line with data flowing out of such areas as ergonomics-human factors, the psychology of perception, neurology, endocrinology, systems analysis, General Systems Theory and so on. As with any other management system, adaptations to such external factors and data have been uneven. Military map symbol systems, for example, still have not broken free of their rectilinear boundaries, while headquarters have become subject to rather than masters of the mechanical problems of uprooting and moving sensitive communication equipment. Behavioral psychologists, leadership theorists and management consultants all might look closer at the increasing splendor of environment that contributes to the "headquarters syndrome," the aloofness, impersonality, and pettiness common in perceptions of the headquarters historically. The contempt for "brass hats" is a steady theme in the literature and subculture of war, e.g., Jean Larteguy's Colonel Raspeguy in *The Centurions* who categorized officers as consisting of fighters and "the others"; James Jones' Sergeant Warden in *From Here to Eternity* who expressed a Populist view of officers when faced with taking a commission; and Irwin Shaw's World War II enlisted men setting up visiting staff officers for an enemy ambush in order to get their winter clothing. The "them-us" problem is always implicit in the isolation of the higher levels in administrative structures; this area in particular where official histories and academic military history alike shows marked deficiencies in penetrating the social aspects of armies. Tolstoy, Kipling, Crane, Barbusse, Remarque, Jones, Forester, Dos Passos, Mottram, Mailer, Chamales, Zweig, *et al.* described the life of soldiers in terms rarely seen in official histories or even commanders' memoirs. One might argue that empathy for the plight of the "lower participants" is a key element in the evolution of a command style, if not technique. One can, in any case, hardly overlook the memoirs, biographies, and histories in the search for data on command method. They constitute a vein of ore, however rare the nuggets. Rommel's observations on command, for example, were as terse as his style in the field. His main objection was to fitting plans and operations into a predefined structure, and overdetailing what he referred to as "unnecessary academic nonsense." In defining leadership characteristics, he stressed flexibility, decisiveness, mental alertness, technical competence and awareness of the human component.[19] On the other hand, Francis de Guingand, Montgomery's chief-of-staff, and James Harbord, Pershing's, both commented extensively on the structure and the method of work in their respective headquarters,[20] as did Adm. William Sims, commander of U.S. naval forces in Europe in 1917-18, in a detailed description of the "London Flagship" in *The Victory at Sea.*[21] In

respect to self-consciousness and thought about command method, Patton was one of the most energetic analysts among modern military writers. Observations, maxims, and principles that eventually found their way into his guidelines for staffs and commanders in World War II are scattered through *War as I Knew It*,[22] in which one finds continual expression of frustration stemming from Patton's awareness of the need to leave control of combat to his subordinates. He commented at length on how his function as a tactician was marginal relative to the manipulation of the symbolism of combativeness and confidence. While Patton has been characterized as neurotic, vain and a remnant of the age of chivalry, in his writings he expressed great awareness of how major commanders had become more like coaches on the bench and less like quarterbacks. While many critics of Eisenhower focused on his lack of combat experience and his failure to play Great Captain in World War II, as time passes one sees how the detachment of senior leaders from the tactical realm was vital to success in World War II. In spite of bullying, Churchill and Roosevelt rarely played tactician, while Hitler was busy moving battalions.

Courtney Whitney provided a detailed sketch of MacArthur's headquarters routine which reveals the same sense displayed by Patton in keeping disengaged from the basic mechanics of the staff system, and maintaining a somewhat detached yet commanding role. MacArthur's refusal to have a private secretary or a phone in his simply furnished office, his casual "dropping-in," leaving the staff alone during half of the working day, the use of dinner and an evening movie as a means for informal discussion and long hours of solitude when reviewing decisions are as destructive of the stereotype of simple bluff soldier as are Patton's cerebrations.[23] In both cases, the awareness of the importance of what Kipling called "the sweet leaving well enough alone" are evident as is the sense that the command includes a strong symbolic aspect well beyond the realm of administrative efficiency.

It is interesting to note the thinness and unevenness of less than spectacular major commanders memoirs. In Sir John French's recounting of his brief time in command of the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-1915, one sees the staff only in glimpses, almost impressionistically. He had, after all, made his public reputation in directing a massive cavalry charge in the field. In fairness, however, one must admit that his fall and the assumption of his command by a "modern" university-trained soldier, did not end the sense of frustration.[24]

The memoirs of Sir Charles Townshend, who surrendered at Kut al Amara in 1916 are, like French's, really an apologia, and at the other extreme from French's, an example of the problems that can stem from overintellectualization. Perhaps they are the last gasp of post-Napoleonic geometry. Townshend's conduct of the defense against the Turkish siege of Kut, which led to the first surrender of a British field army since Yorktown, is described and detailed, with much theory and many diagrams. His ignoring of the fate of his troops at the hands of the Turks while he lived in splendor as a captive must be contrasted with his soaring essays. In this instance, at least, rationalization, logic and systemization served as a camouflage for something else.[25]

The case of Lt. Gen. Sir John Monash who commanded the Australian Corps (in reality a field army) in France and Belgium 1917-18, also provides interesting data in regard to command method. A reservist, overage, overweight, a civil engineer and lawyer in peacetime, a colonial and Jewish, Monash was nevertheless the man with whom Lloyd George hoped to replace Sir Douglas Haig as Commander of the

British Expeditionary Force.[26] In spite of his deviance from the image of the appropriate commander, Monash won steadily and with lower casualties than most of the B.E.F. The political pressures of commanding an all-volunteer force raised by Prime Minister Hughes and Monash's own habits of concise and organized thought shaped his tactics and produced significant results in a war in which the Germans had referred to the British as "lions led by donkeys."[27] Monash used an intuitively developed systems approach, constantly honing and realigning the structure of command in the spirit of the motto: "the staff is the servant of the troops."

Among other officers of the First World War, Monash examined the implication of radio, and became conscious of the tendency for headquarters in battle to get swamped and to communicate fitfully or unevenly as well as, on occasion, to distort or hold back information. Montgomery, on a division staff in 1918, formulated the beginning of what became his "J" system, the placing of independent reporters on the battlefield to supplement command information by direct transmission to higher headquarters, bypassing the ordinary chain-of-command signal network,[28] along the lines of the much more elaborate "Phantom" system of World War II.[29]

In surveying doctrine, biography and history, one finds little evidence of a steady approach to command method, or of definition of the command function itself. The blur of the actual process may stem from the fact that much of the work is done by anonymous staffs. The names of the chiefs of staff of major commanders in military history—Berthier, Halleck, Bullard, Aldinger, Bedell Smith, Whitney—are on the margin of memory compared with the names of the fighting captains. As Maurice Baring noted in World War I, staff duty is onerous, not only because of the nonrecognition of grinding work and references to "gabardine swine," but because most staff officers, like Major Bellamy in "Upstairs, Downstairs," want to be at the front.[30] Thus in much military writing the actual command process and its essential flow of information and technique eclipsed, by the descriptions of what happened on the map (with perhaps a reference to formal structure of the organization) the interaction of personalities and not a little might-have-beening.[31] In respect to even such simple things as headquarters siting, for example, there is little treatment beyond such obvious rules of thumb as centrality, natural camouflage, blending in with the normal traffic flow and keeping in contact with the next subordinate layer. (In 1943, when Mark Clark was criticized in front of the press for his cautious headquarters placement by Gen. Henri Giraud, Clark responded by observing that Giraud had been captured in both World Wars.)[32]

Whatever the realities of the growing importance of the staff, the command role has remained to most officers the "sole reason and justification" of a professional's career, while the staff officer's role is seen as that of virtually a civilian, where only a "quick and accurate mind and a retentive memory are needed."[33] Nevertheless, with the growing sense in the 20th century that increasing complexity and scale have been eroding crisp control, a common theme in recent fiction and popularization of war is dysphasia of command monitoring and operations, e.g., *The Naked and the Dead*, *Twelve O'Clock High*, *A Bridge too Far*, and *Midway*. There is, of course, in such versions of "reality" often an intent born of politics or alienation to depict war as futile and commanders as dunces. Many such efforts suffer from the imbalance implicit in polemic. Yet the pattern is also evident in postmortems born of officially sponsored research and records. Midway, for example, now seems a victory born of accident upon

accident, in which the levels of "high" command on the American side were virtually out of touch with the main events.[34] Verdun, 1916, far bloodier, saw a similar pattern of the breakdown of perception and effective control.[35] The First World War was the first psychological encounter of Western Europe with the dispersed, depersonalized protracted form of battle on land and at sea that had been the experience of Americans in 1861-65 and the Russians and Japanese in 1904-1905. The microwars of Empire had kept alive the tradition of the commander on the field controlling events, a *la* Kitchener at Khartoum. Command malfunction led Hemingway to describe the collective performance as equivalent to the line-breeding of idiots. The Chief of Staff of the British Expeditionary Force went forward toward the front for the first time during the Passchendaele campaign in late 1917, a battlefield churned into a swamp by weeks of artillery fire during a rainy season, where infantry attacked while laying their own footway with duckboards, and was reported as having burst into tears and blurting: "Good God, did we really send men to fight in that?" His guide, who had been at the front, merely advised: "It's worse further on up."[36]

To be somewhat more charitable and clinical, one could say that the attempt of commanders to overcome the growing gap between central control and operations has been uneven. Some, like Rommel and Montgomery, attempted to keep their headquarters far forward, beyond what some critics felt was appropriate. Montgomery's avoidance of written orders and keeping in touch through maintaining a forward headquarters in "battle atmosphere," as well as bypassing the chain of command through the use of *aides-de-camp* did not gain him points in the game of reputation-building with the press or his colleagues, as Henry J. Taylor noted.[37] In spite of the growth of delegation and task specialization, the expectancy within and without military systems that a commander should appear omniscient and in control of things has continued. Yet to exercise their function as symbols, commanders often left actual command in the hands of chiefs-of-staff. At the same time, the *actual mechanical* ability of the commander to intervene and direct operations has been growingly difficult. In the First World War, it was noted in the British Army that commanders promoted for their abilities at low levels failed at higher commands, a paradox known then as the "fighting commanders' syndrome," a form of the Peter Principle in which personal combativeness and closeness to the troops in combat hampered the ability to administer at higher levels. In a wartime army--or navy or air force--the probability of having an able second-in-command to carry on is reduced by the thinning out of professional competence. Bravery and aggressiveness can thus create problems, if saliying forth leaves marginal competence or sluggishness in its wake.

Yet the fact that promotability is based on a "presentation of self" as aggressive, confident and forthcoming presents even yet another paradox, or rather several paradoxes. First, the functional role of commanders at each level of command above the zone of combat thins out over time. Many infantrymen in World War II saw their theater or army commander as often as they did any leader in their immediate parent organization above regiment. In the Navy, exposure to major command figures was rarer still. Perhaps this is the reason that Halsey in *The Caine Mutiny* and Eisenhower in *Patton* were depicted as faceless Olympian figures. Frido von Senger und Etterlin observed in considering the commander's function that "confidence is a magical source of power"[38] which calls to mind how frequently commanders are remembered from their manipulation of symbols,

such as dress, of exotic vehicles, habits or other distinctive personal signatures used to make them apparent to subordinates. MacArthur's sunglasses, scrambled eggs hat and corncob pipe; Napoleon's, Zach Taylor's, Montgomery's and Grant's simplicity of dress; Jeb Stuart's plume; Custer's gaudy tailoring; Rommel's goggles, scarf and leather coat; the Ike jacket; Ridgway's cap and hand grenades; Patton's strident thespianism; Wingate's beard and topee; Wellington's civilian hunting garb—all virtual gestalt signatures. Psychic distance poses problems for leaders in all types of organizations, and a special one in military organizations. The Soviet shift from consensualism to a rigid authoritarian system in the wake of the disasters of 1941 comes easily to mind, and reflects the paradox that when the military systems are used to act out or test political or social goals, such projects, however worthwhile in moral or political terms, can be irrelevant to or run counter to military effectiveness in war.[39] From the evidence available it appears that in spite of much of the rhetoric of the period, the North Vietnamese regular forces were far more traditional in their discipline than most American units. While the Vietnamese war has been generating a steady stream of postmortems, little of it has focused on the dynamics of command, other than passing references to such problems as commanders hovering safely over troops in action, ruthlessness, unethical behavior and similar problems stemming from a sense of frustration and alienation in a war when the dynamics of careerism became a major point of focus in the U.S. Army officer corps. The Department of the Army study *Command and Control* focused mainly on organizational structure and problems of coordination with the South Vietnamese in an unstable political environment. In passing, however, its authors pointed out a fact often forgotten and rediscovered, that political complexities in war may militate against a "simple, well-defined and flexible" structure.[40] Some might suggest that such a model might not have come into being even if no external political factors existed, for in the "real world" relations with Allies, interservice rivalry, careerism, personalities and similar factors shape structure and behavior, and contaminate ideal models.

Tension between leadership styles in peace and war has long been evident in professional officer corps. The "constabulary" model of officers—consensual, cerebral, and empathic—fits requirements of peace and limited war, and conforms to standards of professionalism laid down by Huntington. At the same time, this model, a product of evolution rather than design, conflicts with popular perceptions of leader/manager roles as directive and authoritarian, i.e., what Victor Thompson referred to as the Mosaic myth. Many expect leaders to be strong father figures, radiating the threat of force and a sense of surety, if not infallibility, a *la* Vince Lombardi, John Wayne and Patton. A typology of historical leaders, however, would show a full range of styles from bombast and swagger to virtual obscurity and semi-anonymity.[41] Are, then, preeminent leadership styles idiosyncratic, or deviations from the norm? Are they a designed imposition of will? Or are they systemic byproducts or outputs? A question following from this is how much—if leadership style is a product of self-conscious design—do tricks and symbol manipulations lapse into charlatanism whether it works or not? T.E. Lawrence was embarrassed by the ease of it, and Patton far more self-conscious about his veneer than those who took his histrionics at face value might believe.

Indeed, the most important pattern element in command method may be the commander's symbolizing authority in a way that stimulates motivation among potentially indifferent or hostile

participants, working against psychic and real distance between the upper echelons of command and the operational level. The role of bureaucratic structure and function and of "filters," i.e., functionaries, is extremely hard to follow in analyzing documentation. Being tedious and boring (provided documents reflect the actual decisions made and the interplay of personalities), such studies are less likely to attract the attention of those on the verbal side of the "Two Cultures."[42] A growing involvement of civilian politicians, bureaucrats and policymakers with military policy has also affected the image of the commander, and has eroded roles once seen as the exclusive province of the military.[43] It is interesting to compare Lincoln's visits to the War Department telegraph room with Doris Kearns' description of Lyndon Johnson's using of the situation room as a refuge, which endowed "illusion with the appearance of precision."[44] Given the trends in command-and-control technology which have steadily abstracted the realities of war and the images of Lincoln and Johnson, it is obvious there is need for more than a little probing to be done in the area of command method. Close analysis of this area might well be of considerable value to peace researchers and revisionist historians, as well as to analysts working in an advocate or clinical direction.

The benefits to the military profession of closer research on command method seem balanced by some counterforces. There is the Hamlet syndrome, the danger, evident in examples of many leaders given to too much reflection, that the native hue of resolution may indeed be sicklied o'er by a pale cast of thought. The isolation of principles of military command method and style beyond the broad and sometimes contradictory principles and maxims of leadership already extant as military and management lore might have the confining effect that doctrine often has, and therefore be either ignored or rigidly adhered to. Obviously, from the standpoint of military utility, too strong a set of guidelines or body of predictive data in this area would have profound influence on morale, on politics, and on intelligence and propaganda. An objectively identified "comer" would be a target for intraorganization rivals, not to mention an enemy in war. If promotion were certain, who would stay to compete? If doctrine rather than trait proved the key to command performance, the principle of surprise would be at least eroded. It is a worthy goal, of course, to optimize. There is also danger implicit in trying to make seem certain those things that cannot be reduced to an abstract or predictable model. Some feel that there is a conceptual time bomb ticking in the social sciences in respect to the dynamics of power and leadership, which has latent in it the power in social terms equivalent to the discovery of fission. Research in this area may never reach the point that it allows the design of a new organizational mousetrap or philosopher's stone. It may also be that the correlates to leadership performance may be pathologies of mind or environment, and which the structure and role expectancy of military organization and technology bring forth. The heart of the matter in respect to command method is the issue of the corporealization of power that reaches its ultimate form in the setting of military authority, and those who seek to understand and manage conflict cannot ignore the seductive aspects of authority extant in role of *grand chef*. Whatever one thinks of Wilson, one must concede that he, unlike most other major modern political leaders, did not lust to control the sword. Insomuch as the preservation of the essence of freedom implicit in civilian control is related to the apparatus of military authority that has been so greatly heightened in the nuclear age, the main

thrust of any investigation of command method must be the extent to which the system controls, or shapes expectancy and action, and thereby bends resolve and policy rather than bending to them.

In surveying the material extant, the question often passed through my mind: why has this vital problem been treated so often in passing, fragmentarily, at the expense of mechanistic detail or anecdotes? It certainly fits the conclusion of Irving Knickerbocker that leadership is something invested in leaders by the led rather than projected down, in a kind of live-action collective Rohrschach test. Yet there is another dimension, in keeping with Alistair Cooke's view that making money, like other arts, is something that cannot be taught, as critics of the "principles of war" have often suggested. Like medicine, war is an art practiced under great stress, and Lord Slim suggested generalship was one of the higher art forms. In analyzing the practice of command as an "art," dangers of abstraction and reduction quickly emerge, the very bane of military history and analysis along with hindsight. One would not expect any group of fledgling conductors to benefit evenly in their subsequent careers by an exposure to a Toscanini, a Beecham or an Ozawa. More critical, perhaps, is that analysis of art is like the problem biologists face when they speak of killing to dissect. Music may therefore be a better analogy to the model of military and naval leadership than literature and the visual arts as it is done live, under pressure. One can well imagine what any bureaucracy would do to the living process of art with a plethora of doctrine, manuals, and lesson plans. For some time to come one may expect, as with quarterbacks, that military leaders will learn as the game is played. That does not mean that the question of selection and training of leaders should not be of paramount concern to military systems, far more so than it has really been in the eyes of more than a few. It may well be fortuitous that the military leaders of democracies have not been broken to the harness any more than they have, given their unique problems of leadership and the political realities. The orgy of self-criticism that has emerged since Vietnam has not been a bad exercise in consciousness raising. Nevertheless, the hunger for structures as touchstones and the laboratory-tested American need for closure in problem solving can produce problems. Flies trapped in amber have a kind of immortality, but they do not fly again. If command style and method is too closely wedded to doctrine, it negates the factor of surprise. What is even and predictable on one side, may not be on the other. Many researchers in the field of innovation have noted that a major trait related to creativity is a tolerance for ambiguity. Thus tolerance above and beyond the norms of patience may be required in approaching the very delicate flower of command method. A recalling of Washington's family motto does not seem wholly inappropriate:

"Results prove the deeds."

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

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NOTES

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4. Martin Blumenson, *The Patton Papers, 1940-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 436.

5. See Michael Howard, *War in European History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 100-102, for a loftier view of the staff in the 19th and 20th centuries; and James D. Hittle, *The Military Staff: Its History and Development* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole, 1961) for a straightforward overview of staff development; Glen R. Johnson and Fred M. Walker, *The Army Staff Officer's Guide* (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1975) for current state-of-the-art.

6. See Paul Dickson, *The Electronic Battlefield* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976) for an overview of the benefits and problems stemming from the evolution of C^3 technology in the last decade.

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12. Arthur Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 186.

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14. E.g., Bourne, p. 234; see Charles W. Bray, "The Future of Military Psychology," *Psychology and Military Proficiency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), pp. 224-237; Charles H. Coates and Roland J. Pellgrin, "Military Management and Military Leadership," *Military Sociology* (University Park, Md.: Social Science Press, 1965), pp. 177-195; Wallace F. Veaudry and John G. Campbell, "Assessment Centers: A New Look at Leadership Evaluation," *Army*, February 1974, pp. 23-26.

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17. Paul Williams in "Crisis Management" in *Contemporary Strategy: Theories and Policies*, edited by John Baylis, et al. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1975), pp. 152-171.

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24. See John French, *1914* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), p. 71 and pp. 247-261.

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32. Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 230.

33. Masters, p. 200.

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35. Alistair Horne, *The Price of Glory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962).

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37. Henry J. Taylor, *Men and Power* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1946), p. 64.

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39. Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War,* edited by Russell Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), especially, "The Political and Military Line of Our Party," pp. 163-184.

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