COMBAT LEADERSHIP: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SCIPIO AFRICANUS AND ERWIN ROMMEL

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by

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ABSTRACT

COMBAT LEADERSHIP: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SCIPIO AFRICANUS AND ERWIN ROMMEL, by Major William R. Appleby, 129 pages.

This comparative study is a historical review of Scipio Africanus and Erwin Rommel in the context of combat leadership. They are compared and assessed according to the author's "Four Tenets" that were developed from personal experience, Department of Defense officership doctrine and USMC and US Army doctrine. The purpose of the thesis is to offer a view of two vetted combat commanders, separated by thousands of years and operating in different arenas of the environments of the tactical, operational and strategic.

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ACRONYMS

USA	United States Army
USMC	United States Marine Corps
DIME	Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There are multiple examples in history of successful combat leaders. There are good ones and bad, there are some mediocre ones as well. History judges these leaders in different ways. There are the infamous "Top Ten" lists on the History Channel for everything from equipment to uniforms, and there are more introspective examinations of leaders from the past in the writings of different authors that are graded based on what one academic decides.

What is to gain from these rankings and suppositions on what a good or great combat leader is? In serious examination of a cross-section of proven leadership, there needs to be a series of distinctions on the types of leadership. First, this thesis will look at two distinctive combat leaders, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, and Erwin Rommel. These leaders have been selected because they were directly involved in the physical act of conducting combat while leading troops to capture objectives. Also, their efforts in history are relevant to what is expected from competent combat leaders today. To be clear, *combat leaders* are different from *military leaders*. There can be great leadership off the battlefield that has a ranging and lasting impact, but for this thesis, *combat leadership* is the primary distinction as it is the ultimate expression of why the military commander exists.

This distinction can be explained by the example of General George C. Marshall. He had a substantial impact on the conduct of World War II and on the armed forces at large, but his major contribution to the U.S. Army was not in the direct action associated with what can be described as combat. Scipio and Rommel were combat leaders, selected

precisely because of their combat achievements, propensity for progressive and learned success, and the fact that they provided examples of the leaders that were on the ground and making decisions at the point of friction. They were selected because of the style of their achievements, the methods that they successfully used, which are replicated by modern military organizations.

The thesis will also evaluate four specific tenets developed for this evaluation that are grounded in current United States Department of Defense (DoD), United States Marine Corps (USMC) and United States Army (USA) doctrine.[1] They are referenced in DoD, USMC, and US Army leadership principles, the USMC leadership traits, and the US Army values.[2] These principles (both USMC and USA), although similar, are the guiding rules to all who enter each combat service. To complement these principles, the USMC also has a list of fourteen leadership traits, listed in Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM) 1-0, *Leading Marines*. These traits are introduced to each Marine, whether officer or enlisted, at the time of induction to boot camp or commissioning source. They

[1] Appendix A from this thesis. The United States Marine Corps Leadership Principles and Traits as well as the United States Army Values are listed. Every Marine and Soldier is taught these core ideals as a foundation of leadership.

[2] Department of the Navy, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps (DoN HQMC), Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM) 1-0, *Leading Marines* (Washington, DC: DoN, HQMC, 3 January 1995), 103. Listed in Appendix A; Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Directorate, 1 August 2012), 3-1 -3-3. Listed in Appendix A; DoN HQMC, FMFM 1-0, 105. Listed in Appendix A; U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), *The Armed Forces Officer* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2007); Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Directorate, 1 August 2012), 3-1 -3-3. Listed in Appendix A.

are a guide for Marines in ethical decision making on and off the battlefield. The US Army, in Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, names its set of guiding behavioral traits, *Army Values*. Both provide a complement of characteristics to the leadership principles that are similar in nature to the USMC. The reference to the 2007 *The Armed Forces Officer,* published by the DoD in successive editions, is an ethical guide for current military officers and a touchstone on a variety of subjects that deal with leadership.[3]

To be clear, this thesis will not argue that one commander should be declared a "winner" over the other, as that is not the objective. The purpose of this thesis is to show a comparison between the two lauded commanders and what their legacy means to the commanders today. The guiding ideal in the creation of the "Tenets" is demonstrated as exerting your will with command presence, courage (moral and physical) and an indominable esprit d 'corps; exceptional influence on the enemy and on friendly higher and lower organizations that helps or harms your ability to achieve success in combat command; exhibiting progressive and impactful military battlefield success through learned action and experience; and establishing an enduring legacy, not borne of an intent to establish a legacy but one that is a byproduct of a high sense of integrity in executing various levels of command in combat.

These four tenets will be sifted through the lens of what is expected of modern leaders in the United States military today, namely, the USMC and the US Army along with other influences of the higher DoD. This will be the application of the USMC-US

[3] DoD, *The Armed Forces Officer*, 61-74. An approved version of officership and guidelines from the CJCS.

Army leadership traits, principles, and values. In sum, this thesis shows that Scipio and Rommel were exceptional as combat leaders because their leadership accomplishments are an enduring example for modern leaders as explained through the "four tenets" and modern military doctrine.

Both combat leaders, individually, and without question, set a standard of combat prowess, tactical genius, and individual leadership, all on their own merits. This thesis will coalesce the two of the four tenets assembled from modern military doctrine on ethics and leadership, as well as from the modern USMC and US Army doctrine and culture. The principles and leadership traits and values from both services and the DoD provide a baseline of what the standard is for each of the respective services members (officers). That, however, does not make an all-encompassing checklist of what makes up the *exceptional* combat leader. Therefore, this thesis will look at foundational examples using the combat situations in which the leaders were directly involved. This will orient the reader towards how the individual had developed his own approach to the business of war. It will also illuminate how he developed his individual character that set him apart from other combat commanders in history. Each will be assessed according to the four tenets that have been constructed in order to pull together attributes to describe each in total. Lastly, the conclusion will assess and discuss how each commander is different in character and how they stand out as great combat leaders and examples to future commanders.

In crafting the four tenets, this thesis focuses on the commanders by using outside resources in order to narrow this scope. The research started with a look at combat leadership in an online journal. In a letter that General George C. Marshall wrote to a

friend about qualities that a combat leader must have, he explained what he considered essential to be successful attributes. “To be a highly successful leader in war four things are essential, assuming that you possess good common sense, have studied your profession, and are physically strong.” Starting with these criteria, which is similar in nature to the USMC Leadership Principles and Traits; USA Leadership Principles and Values, Marshall goes on to list them in his letter:

> 1. When conditions are difficult, the command is depressed, and everyone seems critical and pessimistic, you must be especially cheerful and optimistic.
>
> 2. When evening comes, and all are exhausted, hungry and possibly dispirited, particularly in unfavorable weather at the end of a march or in battle, you must put aside any thought or personal fatigue and display marked energy in looking after the comfort of your organization, inspecting your lines and preparing for tomorrow.
>
> 3. Make a point of extreme loyalty, in thought and deed, to your chiefs personally; and in your efforts to carry out their plans or policies, the less you approve the more energy you must direct to their accomplishment.
>
> 4. The more alarming and disquieting the reports received or the conditions viewed in battle, the more determined must be your attitude. Never ask for the relief of your unit and never hesitate to attack.[4]

Keeping Marshall’s opinion in mind, as well as the USMC and US Army doctrine, the four tenets were developed to narrow the thesis view on each commander.

[4] J. D. Dolan, “4 Essentials of Combat Leadership: A Letter by George C. Marshall and the Application to Business,” LDR, 30 October 2017, accessed 6 October 2019, https://www.ldrleadership.com/blog/essentialsofcombatleadership.

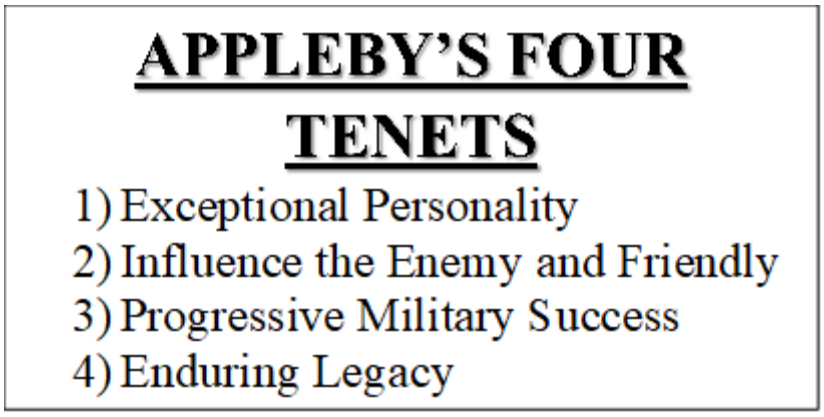

Figure 1. Leadership Characteristics Developed from USMC, U.S. Army, DoD Doctrine

Source: Created by author.

Tenet 1: Exceptional Personality

Tenet 1 begins with a solid and uncompromising positive attitude, or the ability to see the objective or end state and persevere in a positive manner when there are outside actors that attempt to derail a leader's determination. Exceptional personality is critical in not just the forging ahead with the objective in mind but also as a force of will for the subordinates to hold onto as a motivational aspect. Relate this to a military land navigation exercise; the leader that shows he is confident in the direction he is going will generally allay other's fears that the leader is competent. The benefits of having a positive attitude also apply to making mistakes. The more confident and cheerful leader, that conveys positivity in the accomplishing the mission, will be better accepted by subordinates even when there are changes that must be made in the original execution of the plan. The positive attitude translates to confidence. Otherwise, there will be questions from the subordinates because, if the leader is not confident in his actions in leading the troops, then he is open to second guessing from them. Exceptional personality also can be

construed to optimistic interpretation of information and intelligence. This is part of the feedback that a leader gives, whether verbally or non-verbally, to his subordinates during operations. Interpreting progress, or lack thereof, is vital to communicating that the leader is leading the group to success. The cost to a group that interprets shortcomings about their commander is counterproductive. A military unit in combat needs reassurance, especially when there are losses, or when the group is enduring hardship and has a bleak outlook on their survival. Attitude is everything in implicit and explicit communications to subordinates and most likely the best resource to draw from as a leader in order to push a group of men, under dire circumstances, to accomplish hard and almost impossible objectives while undergoing terrible circumstances.

There are other personality traits that can be assembled under this tenet. The most outstanding is courage. The word courage itself is wrought with several caveats and understandings about what it really is. The most outright display of courage is on the battlefield, i.e., charging a pillbox with a K-BAR and a hand grenade. Another way to look at courage is the story of the Private First Class (PFC) that was standing post, on a particularly chilly day, at an ammunition dump. The Marine Commandant at the time, General Jim Jones, had his hands in his pockets and walked by the Marine. The Marine calls out to him (most likely not recognizing who he is), "Get those hands out of those Army gloves!" The Commandant, slightly embarrassed but more proud that the PFC had the courage to call him out, immediately promoted him.[5] The way that this characteristic

[5] This story is a relation of a SgtMaj to his battalion to highlight the need for moral courage. It has no reference but does underscore the value of moral courage as a leadership trait.

can be explained for the purposes of this thesis, not only to be exemplified in physical action but also as a moral equivalent. Courage is an exponent of what Carl Von Clausewitz calls out in his chapter: *On Military Genius*. He states, "Courage is of two kinds: courage in the face of personal danger, and courage to accept responsibility, either before the tribunal of some outside power or before the court of one's own conscience."[6]

The last part to Tenet 1 is the most essential: Indominable personality. This is translated by most Marines as *Command Presence*. This is an almost indescribable personality trait that most people end their descriptions with, "You know it when you see it." "*It*." That elusive trait commanders such as Scipio and Rommel had in spades. The ability to influence by sheer presence. This trait is most seen on the extreme scale when famous people are in a localized area with fanatic admirers. There is an almost indescribable feeling of inferiority or of super-enlightenment. Both of these commanders had this. The difference being that Scipio and Rommel used this influence to their advantage and in reading their objectives. By sheer personality, the effect on those around them allowed this Tenet to set them apart from others and their legacies.

Tenet 2: Influence on Friendly and Enemy

Extending from Tenet 1, but separate in distinction, is the influence on friendly and enemy actors in exercising their various commands. It is a part of their personal impact, but the effect on both sides is notable to the sense that it is independent of command presence. At first, this could be explained by understanding that they both were

[6] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 101.

experts at understanding the exercising of the Instruments of National Power, being the tools of the Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic (DIME). They did use them differently, Scipio was directly involved in their usage, as opposed to Rommel, since the scope of their combat commands required different approaches. Further, exercising the DIME approach does not allow a fluid picture of how they commanded, nor does it tie to the relevancy of combat itself. For example, Rommel may have been aware of the strategic implications of the allied establishment of a beachhead in Normandy, but this was not why he had argued with Hitler to find a political end to the war. He was thinking first and foremost of the German people, and he was concerned that the Wehrmacht could not match that threat without total annihilation. He was only one arm, military, of what was being used by the Nazi government at the time and was not exclusively commanding the use of these instruments. However, his influence on Hitler provided him with some operational latitude despite the OKH's, *Oberkommando des Heers*, High Command of the Army, more strategic view. Scipio used his force of personality to win both the people in electing him Consul and in dealing with Hannibal. Additionally, Scipio's scope and breadth of his command in Spain and Africa were of such that he was empowered to represent these areas for the Roman Senate whereas Rommel was more of a tool for one aspect of the Instrument of the Military. Both would end up supporting Scipio's aims directly and indirectly, based on his interactions the aftermath of battle. The ability to project a personality to change the effect of tactical, operational and strategic events only set the stage for a building-block of knowledge and learning that evolved into repeated success.

Tenet 3: Progressive Military Success

Both men examined in this thesis will have to properly demonstrate that they have successfully achieved the objectives of repeated battlefield success. This is predicated on the maxim of: One success is good, continued success is expected. That is not to say that there cannot be defeats. Most of the time, anyone that lives and operates in a profession that deals with competition will suffer defeat. In fact, as is seen in the arena of American Football, those that have suffered the lessons of defeat, often come back stronger. This is also part of the consideration inherent in the Tenet. The ability to take a defeat of any kind and allow it to galvanize the next effort, enforce change within an organization and show effect of its motivation in combat is essential. To do so on a repeated basis, albeit not necessarily concurrent, is the totality of how to judge the commanders.

Tenet 4: Enduring Legacy

The product of any successful achievement on the world stage is an enduring legacy. In the case of two of the most successful and impactful combat leaders that have ever existed. A legacy is something that tells the story of either great achievement or great failure. It is the sports channel highlight or the over-played newsreel. In the case of Scipio and Rommel, their legacies are told in volumes of study and, in Rommel's case, in his own words. On the surface of both subjects, they are sometimes lauded for actions that, although important, are not the totality of their accomplishments. In Scipio's career, he fought more than the battle for Zama in defeating Hannibal, and in Rommel's career he was much more than the "Desert Fox." However, the idea of each legacy can be overplayed as well. For example, when reading about the smears of the Roman Senate after the negotiation of the end to the Second Punic War with the Carthaginians or in

view of the “Rommel Myth” concerned with whether or not Rommel was indeed the apolitical hero, and not tarnished by the disease of the Nazi regime.

As a Tenet, both commanders are examined for what they were to bring forward to history and what it means to the modern commander today. It is important to remember that even this thesis is an addition to each of the commander’s legacies. So, in paying homage to them in study, there is an effect, through our opinion on their existing legacies. That being written, the combination of each of the Tenets will allow a deeper understanding and comparison of the two, and with it to enhance the legacies of both.

To sum up on criteria: Four Tenets are selected in order to classify great combat leadership (figure 1). Coupled with the USMC Principles/Traits and US Army Values, the four tenets will provide a comparison of both combat leaders and show the similarities and contrasts that span thousands of years. In this comparison, the thesis will show what has remained constant in the assessment of combat leadership for a commander to be successful. The thesis will also allow comparison on the scope of leadership in the ancient time as compared to twentieth-century warfare.

CHAPTER 2

SCIPIO AFRICANUS

Publius Cornelius Scipio (the younger), later known as Scipio Africanus, was born to a noble family of the Cornelii family in 236 Before the Common Era, or "BCE."[7] As was the custom of the time, his name was the name of his father, Publius Cornelius Scipio.[8] The Older was already in service in the Roman Army and had the distinction of being elected Consul in 218 BCE, in order to defend the Roman state from onslaught coming from the notorious Hannibal Barca, son of Hamilcar Barca of Carthage.[9]

Not remarkable in stature, at least that can be ascertained by any documented history, there are a few descriptions of Scipio Africanus in later life. What can be gleaned

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[7] Today I Found Out, Feed Your Brain, "What Is the Difference Between BCE/CE and BC/AD, and Who Came Up with These Systems?" last updated 17 November 2015, accessed 13 October 2019, http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2015/11/difference-bce-ce-bc-ad-come/.

[8] Richard A. Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus: Rome's Greatest General* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 1.

[9] Roman Consuls, "Every year the people elected 2 Roman consuls," 2019, accessed 8 September 2019, https://www.the-romans.eu/society/Roman-consuls.php.After the last king had been expelled, two Roman Consuls were elected every year by the Comitia Centuriata. These men were equal in power, in such a way that one consul could undo what the other had ordered. This constitutional power was called imperium. The Roman Consuls mainly acted as military commanders. It was the Senate that told them who had to go where with his army and provided the funds. Consul was the highest rank in the Roman society. Polybius Histories 6.12; The Consuls, previous to leading out their legions, exercise authority in Rome over all public affairs, since all the other magistrates except the tribunes are under them and bound to obey them and it is they who introduce embassies to the Senate. As for preparation for war and the general conduct of operations in the field, here their power is almost uncontrolled; for they are empowered to make what demands they choose on the allies, to appoint military tribunes, to levy soldiers and select those who are fittest for service.

from the existing documentation of his early days is that he was a normal youth that was born of a privileged house. Interesting enough, he is credited with the fact that he shaved daily.[10] Scipio, in his formative years leading up to his joining the army as a Cavalryman, was in good physical health and could withstand the rigors of the normal goings-on of the pre-adult male in ancient Rome. It is interesting to note that the custom of shaving was a Greek development after the practice of Alexander and generally, anything that was attributed to Hellenistic belief/practice was less than manly.[11] This is important because when Scipio started to gain notoriety after the battle of Ticinus, his political detractors would point to this in order to lessen him to the average Roman citizen. Similar to modern times, in the use political barbs in the media today, these types of attacks can be petty but do influence people against a public figure, whether true or not. Yet, young Scipio did shave, and continued to do so for the remainder of his life.

Scipio's family's military lineage could be traced back before the First Punic War around 264-241BCE.[12] His father, with a minimum of ten campaigns (a requirement in order to be elected Consul) would have been instrumental in the military education in relating his experiences and decision-making process that would have had a profound

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[10] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 3.

[11] Christopher Oldstone-Moore, "Off with Their Beards!," *Atlantic*, March 2016, accessed 13 October 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/03/off-with-their-beards/426873/. 30 September 331 BCE, as Alexander the Great prepared for a decisive showdown with the Persian emperor for control of Asia. On that day, he ordered his men to shave.

[12] Bret Mulligan, "The First Punic War," Dickenson College Commentaries, accessed 13 October 2019, http://dcc.dickinson.edu/nepos-hannibal/first-punic-war.

effect upon how the young Scipio would develop. In addition, wealth had its privileges. Assignments were made because of social standing and nepotism. Scipio was assigned to the cavalry, most likely, because his family was one of the five original ruling families and also because he could afford things such as well-made weapons and more importantly, a horse with all the accoutrements he would need for military service.[13]

Defining Military Experiences

Publius Cornelius Scipio, the father, (now referenced as P.C.S.) was charged with the Consulship and the mission to face Hannibal that began the first of many battles comprising the Second Punic War.[14] Setting the stage for Scipio's rise is the situation regarding the relationship with Carthage and Rome. The end of the First Punic War essentially raised tension with Hamilcar, Hannibal's father. Rome took possession of some key trading outposts including Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia. This seemed outrageous to the government of Carthage but more, it was also viewed as the pretext for the next war.[15] Carthage was not only concerned with the loss of economic or political influence, it was also concerned with the expansion of the Roman state and how that would reduce Carthage's own outlook on regional expansion and exploitation. Thus,

[13] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 7.

[14] Bret Mulligan, "The Second Punic War," Dickenson College Commentaries, accessed 20 October 2019, http://dcc.dickinson.edu/nepos-hannibal/second-punic-war.

[15] T. A. Buckney, *Scipio Africanus, The Conqueror of Hannibal: Selections from Livy: Books 26-30* (Oak Park, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1958), 1-3.

Hannibal was dispatched to first establish a base of operations in Spain and then to march on Italy.[16]

This is where the young Scipio enters his first combat trial in his father's army at Ticinus. It is important to note that it was common for commanders to take their sons to battle with them when they reached military age. Further, this rite of passage was most certainly earned and expected of Scipio as he hailed from a military family that was part of the wealthy, land-owning class.[17] The battle was the first in his career and momentous in history as well as in Scipio's life.

Ticinus

[16] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 28.

[17] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 9.

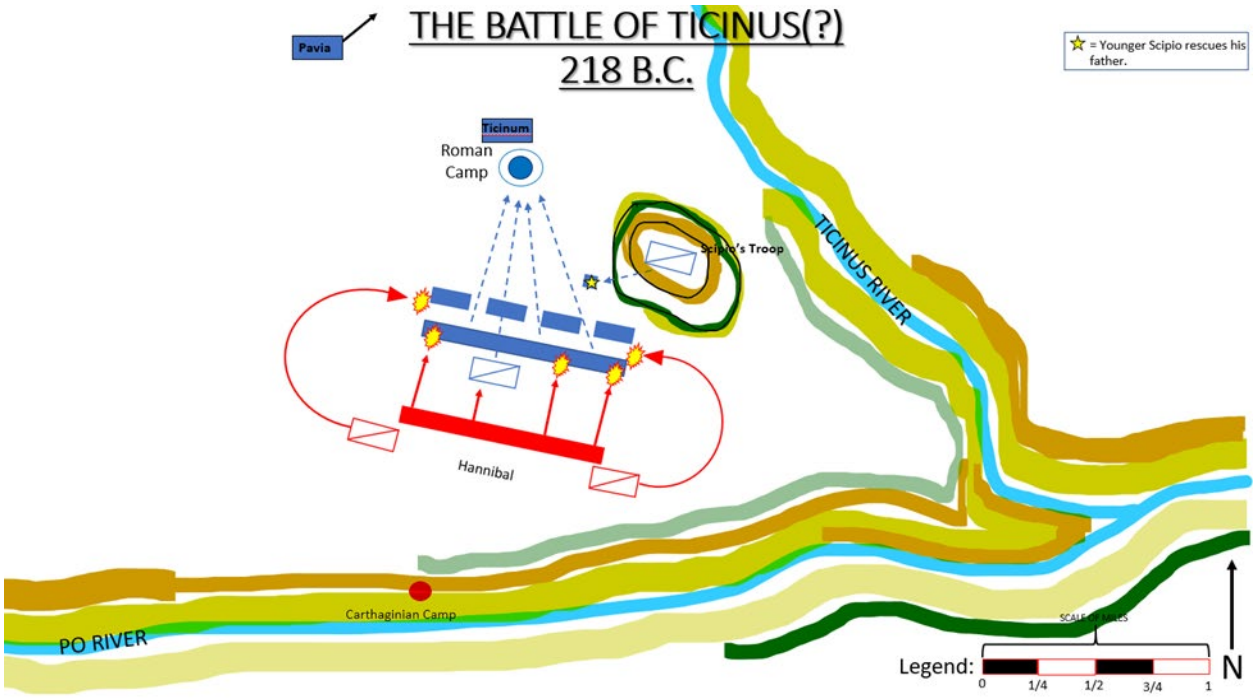

Figure 2. Scipio Sees Hannibal's Army for the First Time in Combat and Shows the First Signs of Courage under Fire

Source: Created by author based on Richard A. Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 7-10.

Hannibal had just crossed the Alps with approximately, 46,000 troops and cavalry and more famously, thirty-seven war elephants. This was a daring trek from Spain, in which he had already enjoyed success over Roman forces, in order to restore some of the lost provinces of Sicily and Corsica by threat of invasion or by negotiation.[18] P.C.S. was elected Consul and charged with raising an army to deal with Hannibal before he could directly threaten Rome. By the time the army was raised, trained and on the move to the first objective, Massilia, it was discovered that Hannibal's army was well advanced of

[18] Mulligan, "The Second Punic War." Noting that Hannibal was able to cross the Alps, a large part of his army did not make it to the first meeting with P.C.S/Scipio. He lost a third of his army and most of the elephants.

that objective and P.C.S.'s problems were much worse than expected.[19] After converging his new forces in or near Pisa, P.C.S. then conducted reconnaissance (recon) in force to locate the main body of the enemy. It can only be inferred that Scipio may have been a part of that action as it was a cavalry-led operation. During that action, they did find a screening force from Hannibal consisting of Numidians, but they were driven away, (or more probably, withdrew to report on the position of making contact with the Roman force). Now the stage was set for Scipio's first engagement.[20]

The battle of Ticinus was an ugly beginning for Scipio, at least as part of what he was to observe. The first engagement was a surprise from Hannibal's forces as the Roman forces were descended upon near the banks of the Ticinus River, while still in column formation and they were surrounded.[21] Further, they were hounded by the fact that Hannibal knew their position and forced the Roman Army to move to ground of Hannibal's choosing for battle.[22] This type of standard operating procedure for Hannibal is key to Scipio's development and in watching this unfold, Hannibal was instructing him but, more importantly, Scipio was learning.

The Roman Army lost this battle. In fact, P.C.S. was extremely lucky to survive it. After the engagement of the forces, Scipio emerged a hero. In the fighting, the cavalry

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[19] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 8. Modern day Marseilles, France.

[20] Ibid., 36.

[21] Gaius Silius Italicus, *Punica,* vol. 1, trans. J. D. Duff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 175-177.

[22] Polybius, *The Histories*, trans. William Roger Paton, ed. E. Capps, T. E. Page, and W.H.D. Rouse, Book 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 2:55-165.

was scattered and P.C.S. became encircled and fought, outnumbered, on the ground. Scipio saw this and realized that he had to do something to save his father. Polybius records this in Books 10 and 3, in his description: "he first tried to cheer on his own squadron to go to his father's assistance, but when he found them considerably cowed by the numbers of the enemy surrounding them, he appears to have plunged by himself with reckless courage into the midst of the enemy; whereupon his comrades, being forced to charge also, the enemy were overawed and divided their ranks to let them pass."[23] There is also another version that is not so well documented as Polybius' version. It was said that a Ligurian slave was responsible for saving the elder Scipio.[24] However, the timing of Scipio being rejoined with his main force at the Roman camp and then when he does reunite with the younger Scipio later for the battle of Trebia, outside of Placentia does coincide with the accolades he paid his son for his bravery. In any regard, this is a pivotal moment for the younger Scipio in not just showing his quality as a son, but in appreciating how Hannibal will use his forces to defeat Roman tactics.

Trebia

[23] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 9. Quote from Polybius, *The Histories,* Books 3 and 10.

[24] Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Punic Wars* (London, UK: Cassell and Company, Wellington House, 2001), 171. This quote is in contrast with Polybius in *The Histories*.

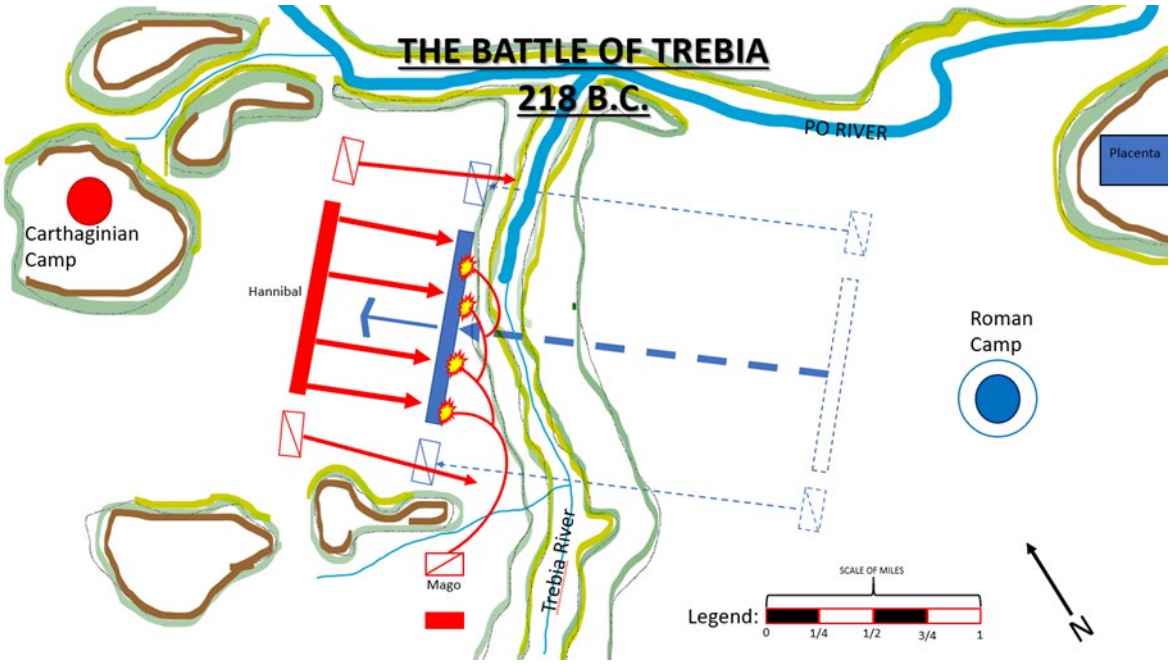

Figure 3. Scipio Witnesses Hannibal's Elephants in Action and Deception in Action against the Roman Legion

Source: Created by author based on Richard A. Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 38; The Romans, "Battle at the Trebia," 2020, accessed 20 October 2019, https://www.the-romans.eu/battles/battle-of-the-trebia.php.

Scipio had yet to taste victory of his making on the battlefield. In that regard, his personal victory of acting in a hopeless situation to save his father at the losing battle of Ticinus would have a lasting effect on how he perceived generalship in the years to follow. The army was retreating, and his father, wounded, relinquished command to Sempronius at the Trebia River.[25] Scipio was on the flank of the army when Sempronius prematurely engaged Hannibal's forces and was then routed when his flank was exposed

[25] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 11. Tiberius Sempronius Longus. In command of the Roman army in the south of Italy that was recalled to aid P.C.S. and joins after Ticinus at the Trebia River after the first meeting with Hannibal's forces.

and his lines broke in a panic.[26] Scipio, leading a troop of cavalry on one of the flanks, was in the thick of it. Hannibal reinforced his flanks with his elephants and Scipio would have probably been driven across the river when the elephants were reinforced by a rear-guard ambush that was staged the night before from troops sent through the swamp. This ambush attack was led by Hannibal's brother Mago and his raiders, on foot for just such an action. There is not a lot of evidence to perceive any behaviors from Scipio other than from what Italicus' *Punica* relates and from this, there is only the poetic prose to suggest that he was even there.

[26] Kennedy Hickman, "Second Punic War: Battle of the Trebia," ThoughtCo, April 2, 2019, accessed 27 October 2019, https://www.thoughtco.com/second-punic-war-battle-of-the-trebia-2360886)

Lake Trasimene

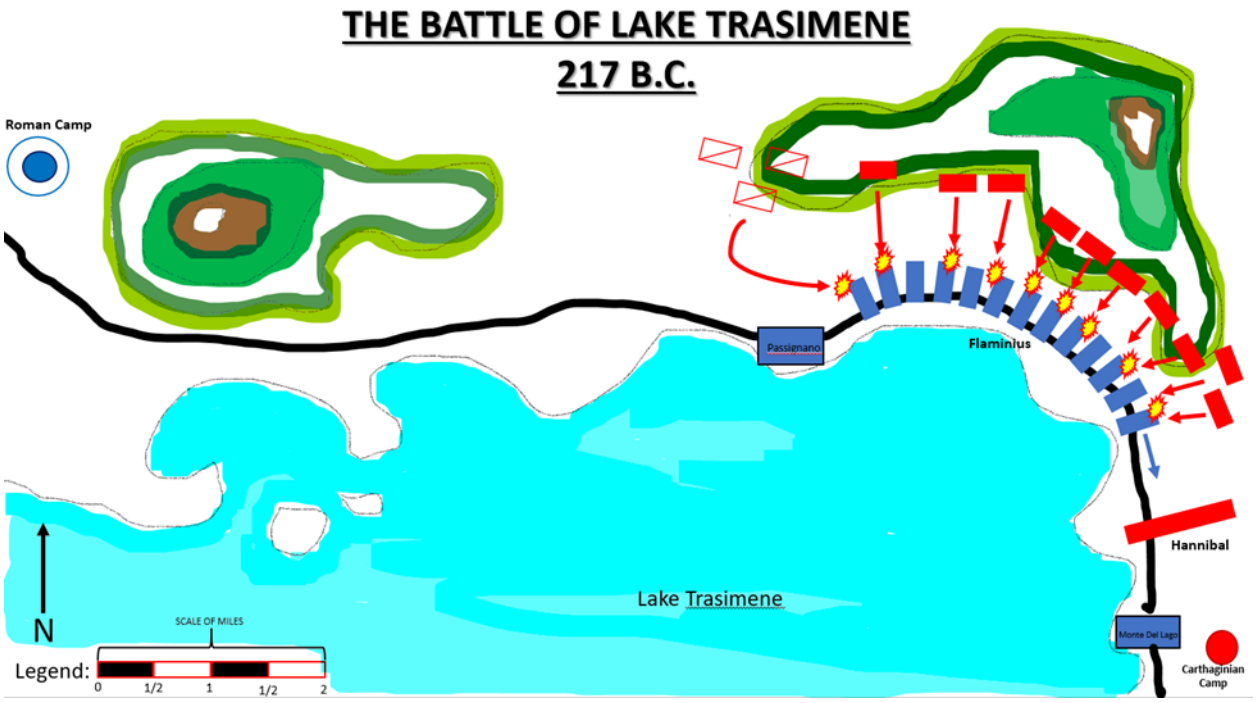

Figure 4. Scipio Learns the Value of Tactical Surprise from Hannibal

Source: Created by author based on Richard A. Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 42.

Approximately a year later, after the total defeat at the Trebia River, the Romans were in a panic. It was winter, and Rome was gathering its collective breath. New armies were raised and were being trained as new orders were issued to the commanders Gaius Flaminius and Gaius Servilius Germinus to take up blocking positions in the thinking that Hannibal would not attempt to cross the Apennines in the winter. They were wrong. He moved over the Apennines to winter in Gaul and canvass for replacement forces.[27]

[27] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 39.

It is not known where Scipio was at this time, but it is assumed that he was still with the cavalry and acting on orders from Flaminius during the battle of Lake Trasimene. This battle is important, though Scipio had a minor part in it, because it shows the learning process to which he ultimately applied his strategic and tactical sense to defeat Hannibal in the future. That being the most singular point for Scipio, he saw first-hand the playbook of Hannibal. By the time he took command, he would have a full understanding of how to prosecute a successful war against the world's ablest general.

Understanding the capability of the enemy is key to the successful planning of operations in the modern era. It was no less important in the ancient world, but somewhat misunderstood or at least, mis-applied. In the prelude to Cannae, what a young commander such as Scipio may have been able to see from the enemy's general is the understanding of how to manipulate ego and personality. It was known that Flaminius "had a reputation as a man given to anger and impetuous acts."[28] Hannibal used this to irritate the Roman general to force him to fight on his terms and in Carthaginian fashion, on his ground. As Hannibal baited Flaminius to come to him, the battle of Lake Trasimene was a rout. Unknown to Hannibal at the time, Scipio saw the tactical genius and psychological manipulation that led to the rout of the Roman forces that resulted in nineteen-thousand killed (along with Flaminius and a reinforcing force that arrived late in the battle) and the hasty retreat of the remainder of the surviving forces. The way to Rome was now open to attack.[29]

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[28] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 39.

[29] Ibid., 43.

Cannae

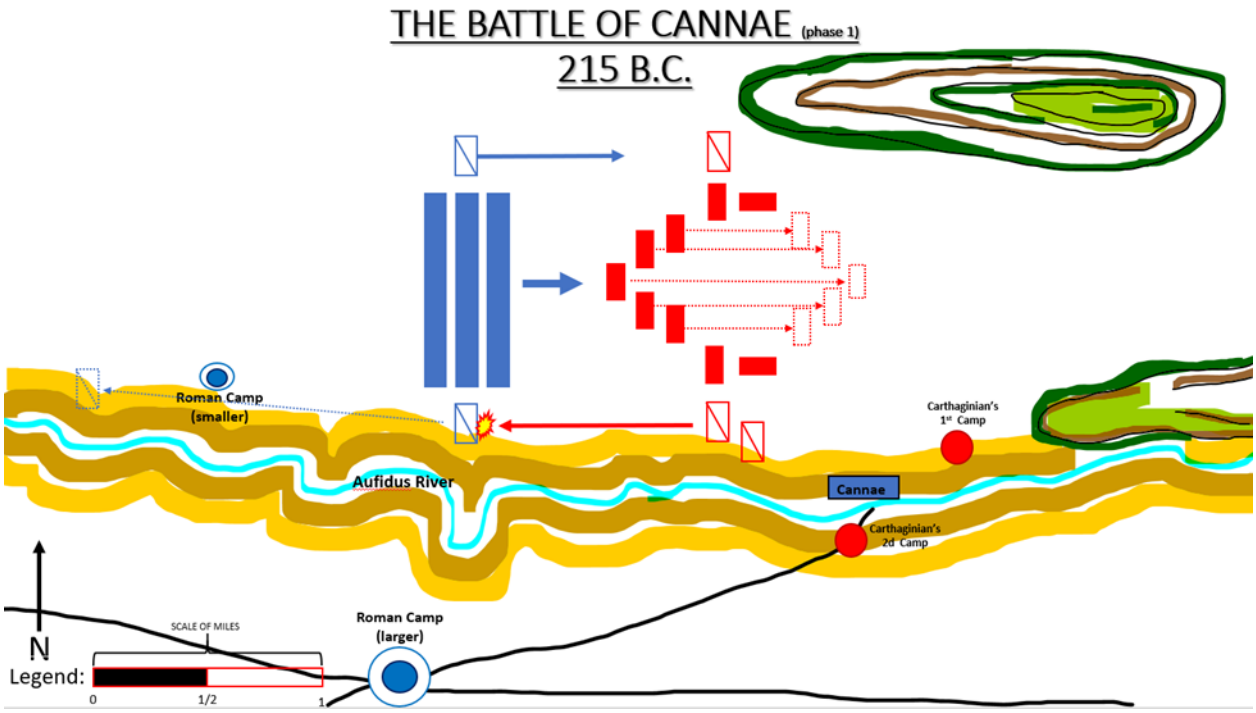

Figure 5. Scipio Sees the Waste of Men, as a Consequence, in Battle from the Selection pf Paullus and Varro as Consuls

Source: Created by author based on Richard A. Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 46.

Scipio was at the battle of Cannae in 216 BCE. He was not, however, part of the fifty-four thousand, two hundred that were piled dead in an area about the size of Central Park (approximately two and a half by a half mile in area).[30] That is not necessarily a military blunder unto itself; it was primarily a political blunder. Because of the method by which Consuls were elected, and then serving a term that would expire after six

[30] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 49.

months, Quintus Fabius would go down in history as the architect of delay and ultimately defeat.[31] The author of the "Fabian Strategy," Fabius was operating on the premise that Rome had the strategic and operational advantages in waiting Hannibal out. He took the long view in that Rome had the ultimate upper hand and that all they had to do was keep Hannibal's army moving and contain him, allowing the Roman Army to reconstitute and train while eroding Hannibal's army and putting more distance between himself and his base of supply. This required a few things that Rome did not have. Political will of the Senate and of the Roman people would have to bear the brunt of support for this strategy of avoiding decisive battle. This was a bitter pill for the populace, in that they were not used to acquiescence, and the more political maneuverings in the Senate that would use this as ammunition for their own designs. The genius of this plan is that, while Hannibal marched, he was further extended from his logistical lines while simultaneously reducing his force as the towns and villages would fear the reprisal of Rome if they rendered aid to him. Ultimately cut off, he was reduced to foraging to support his army, thus he would be open to limited attacks on his foraging parties and resistance from towns and villages that knew the price of treachery if they assisted the Carthaginians.[32] Hannibal was on the move, but not with support, and his time was running short, that is, until Fabius' term as Consul expired.

Enter the Senate and the election of the new Consuls, Lucius Aemilius Paullus and Gaius Terentius Varro. The two were set up for failure from the start and the blame

[31] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 44.

[32] Ibid., 43-44.

was solely on the Senate, who had changed its mind on the "Fabian Strategy." Hannibal, at this time, was running out of time. He was on the run and his resources were in question on a day-to-day basis. His only option was to somehow get the Roman Army to come out and fight him in a decisive battle. Varro, being a perfect vessel of aggression for the Senate, was up for the challenge, and on 2 August 216 BCE, outside of a small town called Cannae, the fight was on.[33]

As part of the six thousand horse cavalry, it is assumed that Scipio was among them. From the accounts from Titus Livius, or simply "Livy," Scipio was part of the approximately four thousand that escaped the annihilation of the Roman armies that day. He and the others were lucky. Hannibal did not follow up and pursue the escaping Romans to Canusium, only four miles from the battlefield.[34] While laying low to avoid notice from the Carthaginian scouts, Scipio and Appius Claudius were looked to as the de-facto commanders, in charge of the remainder of the force. It is noteworthy that this was a contentious time for the two commanders. They were confronted with dissention immediately because of the emotional and mental impact of the defeat from some of the survivors. Scipio showed impressive character in confronting these outbursts of what to do next by admonishing his comrades, "…courage and action, and not deliberation, were necessary in such a calamity."[35] Further, he directly confronted Lucius Caecilius

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[33] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 44-45.

[34] B. H. Liddell Hart, *Scipio Africanus: Greater than Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1926), 12.

[35] Ibid., 13.

Metellus (a young patrician and probably a son of a ranking politician) by saying, "I swear that I will neither desert the cause of Rome, nor allow any other citizen of Rome to desert it…the rest of you present, take this oath; and let the man who demurs be assured that this sword is drawn against him."[36]

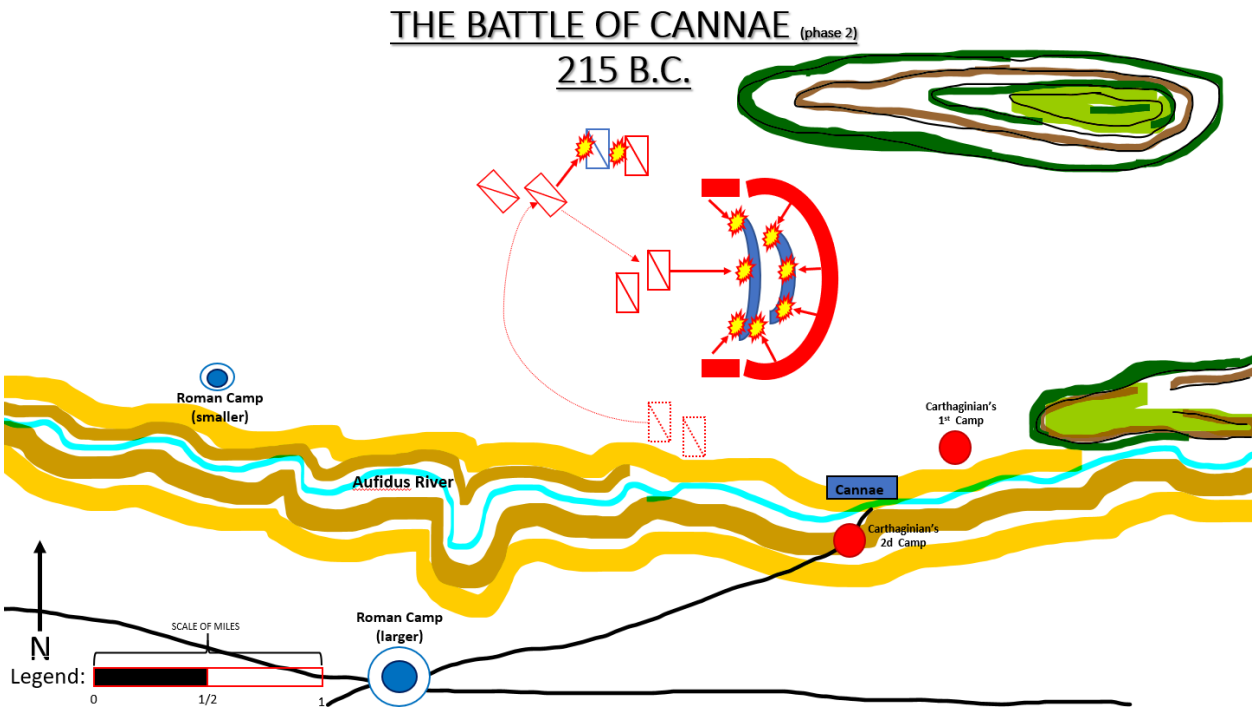

Figure 6. Hannibal Defeats the Roman Legions with Tactical Skill and Deception

Source: Created by author based on Richard A. Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 48.

[36] Hart, *Scipio Africanus*, 13-14.

After consolidating the surviving army, Scipio and Appius linked up with Varro at Venusia and assumedly returned to Rome.[37] This set the stage for Scipio to regroup and then take the lessons that he had learned while involved in the string of defeats that essentially became his university. In this time, P.C.S. and his brother, Gnaeus, were in Spain, prosecuting the Carthaginian strongholds there with much success.[38] That is, until 212 BCE, when the combined forces of the Carthaginians under Mago, Hasdrubal, and Hasdrubal, son of Gisgo ended their run north of the Ebro River, and they were killed.[39] This would set the stage for Scipio and his first command appointment by the Senate at age twenty-four.[40]

Spain

The lessons learned by Scipio while observing the disasters that began with his initial commission at Tincius were apparent with the appointment by the Senate to assume his father's and uncle's armies and destroy the base of operations for Hannibal in Spain. Remembering that Hannibal was still on the march throughout the whole of Italy, it is worthy to note that Scipio did not try to use his personality trait of persuasion on the Senate to attack Hannibal directly, but understood the importance to reassume operations

[37] Ibid., 14.

[38] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 51.

[39] Ibid., 52.

[40] Hart, *Scipio Africanus*, 23.

in Spain as a part of the larger stratagem against not only Hannibal, but at Carthage at large.

He did this by accepting the appointment, assembling his army onto thirty quinqueremes (large, oar-driven warships) and headed to Terraco to link up with any and all remaining Roman forces that were not destroyed with his father and uncle.[41] Upon arrival it is interesting to note what he did to establish his command. Scipio first received ambassadors from his father's Spanish allies and then the Roman officer in charge, General Marcius. Interestingly, Marcius was elected by the troops after the General Gaius Nero had left to gather more troops in order to reinforce Terraco. Scipio treated both commanders, and the Spanish allies, with grace and ensured that his efforts were focused on building the foundation for reforming a team from the demoralized remnants of the Roman effort in Spain. He did not stop there. Where there is great care in today's military to ensure that command climate and morale are of concern for every commander, Scipio paid attention to this matter as a first priority. He addressed the troops directly and engaged them so that they saw their new commander not as a usurper, sent from Rome, but as a concerned leader that is there to instill confidence and cohesiveness. Fresh from defeat and in perilous circumstances, the troops responded to Scipio's appeal to their sense of camaraderie and nationalism. He did not denigrate them, but lifted them up and reminded them that he saw them as soldiers of quality and that he had respect for their efforts.[42] Finally, he did not act immediately with changing training or organization, but

[41] Ibid., 24.

[42] Hart, *Scipio Africanus*, 25-26.

prepared slowly and deliberately so that there was time to absorb the new command, and his intent, as it applied to all the forces that included twenty-eight thousand troops, twenty-eight hundred cavalry and thirty ships. His operational and environmental understanding of the allies, that he built up and appreciated the troops, which he motivated, reorganized and utilized respected commanders, and the enemy, which had presented opportunities for exploitation based on known characteristics that known from experience with Hannibal's forces was to lead to success, and more importantly overall victory in Spain.

New Carthage

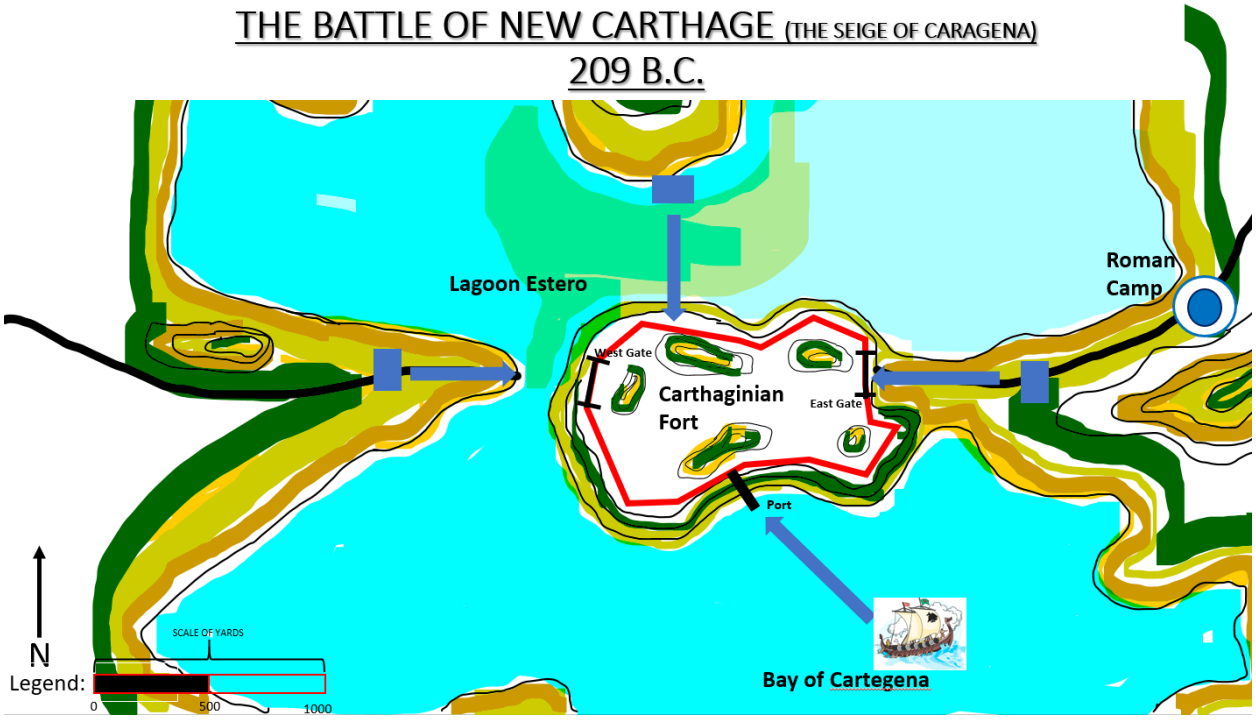

Figure 7. Scipio's First Campaign as a Consul

Source: Created by author based on Richard A. Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 96.

The importance of the Battle of New Carthage is one of many facets. It was the first time that Scipio was in charge of battle, as appointed by the Senate as the commander of all the forces in Spain. Second, the manner in which Scipio orchestrated the victory was masterful in the employment of troops, the logistical obstacles and the enemy situation he was in. Lastly, it showed that Scipio had a unique perspective on command, battle, and winning. Not just to capture an objective, but in understanding the scope of implications of the defeat of the enemy in a foreign area with allies that were indigenous to the territory. The outcome of the battle was that Scipio's forces were able to make entry into the city, and to overpower Mago and his forces that were trying to defend it, using the city itself and with the support of the population that was primarily Punic in custom and ethnicity.[43] The uniqueness of the occupation of the city was that Scipio used slaughter to convince Mago to surrender and then after, to "exterminate every form of life they encountered."[44] Although customary, this was not indicative of how Scipio usually won his victories. As this was his first battle where he was overall commander-in-chief, he may have been swayed by his generals or given into the normality of how war was conducted at the time. What is known, is that after the battle of New Carthage, this tactic was not used by Scipio as a normal way to conduct business again. However, the Romans did take prisoners, so in regard to the slaughter tactic, this was most likely limited in scope and most likely over-played by Polybius as it was

[43] Italicus, *Punica*, 339.

[44] Polybius, *The Histories*, Book 10, 2:15.

customary to assert Roman dominance and to be publicized in the effort to avoid cities to shut out or resist Roman armies.[45]

To the second point of the planning of the mission to New Carthage, Scipio was at a disadvantage in the distance between Terraco and New Carthage and how he was to move the large army and equipment to the city. In estimation, the distance that he was to travel was further than at least two of the three Carthaginian armies that were on the Iberian Peninsula.[46] The risk was palpable. Not only were there three enemy armies operating on the peninsula, but to complicate matters, he did not have determinative intelligence of their positions. He had to guess, and with that, he had to be creative in how he was to move the army of 28,000 troops 400 miles south. The plan involved moving troops and equipment using the thirty ships from Terraco, and a long road march through hostile indigenous territory. Part of the genius of his plan was how he developed the situation through understanding that such a large movement of troops would most assuredly get back to each of the Carthaginian commanders. What he did not know was who would move on him, and if the enemy armies would be able to converge on him before or at his objective. This obvious risk would expose the movements of the enemy and then allow the unmasked enemy to be advanced upon. Keeping New Carthage as an objective was essential, but to allow the enemy to identify his position may have been the original plan.[47] Knowing that Scipio probably had a numerical advantage was key, along

[45] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 98.

[46] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 89.

[47] Ibid., 92.

with enticing the enemy to him on ground of his own choosing showed an advanced understanding of strategy and a shift from the mindless and typical Roman strategy and comfortability in numerical advantage alone.

New Carthage and the defeat of Mago showed several different changes in what was in store for the Carthaginians from Scipio. The brief siege and ultimate victory was notable, but more so was the ability of the young commander to coalesce within the army a comprehensive force that utilized different technologies, i.e., quinqueremes, military deception, i.e., not preventing word of the movement south from getting out, and the germination of loyalty through the working with prior commanders and indigenous allies to create a force that would be successful. This first prize would solidify a base of operations for him to consolidate gains and combat power by leveraging the skills of the people in creating new weapons. He would then apply this development of new tactics and weapons that gave his army the flexibility to hunt the remaining three armies on the Spanish peninsula and deconstruct them at Baecula and Ilipa. Then, he turned his attention southward, and began his work on the greater objective of Carthage itself.[48]

[48] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 101-123.

Zama

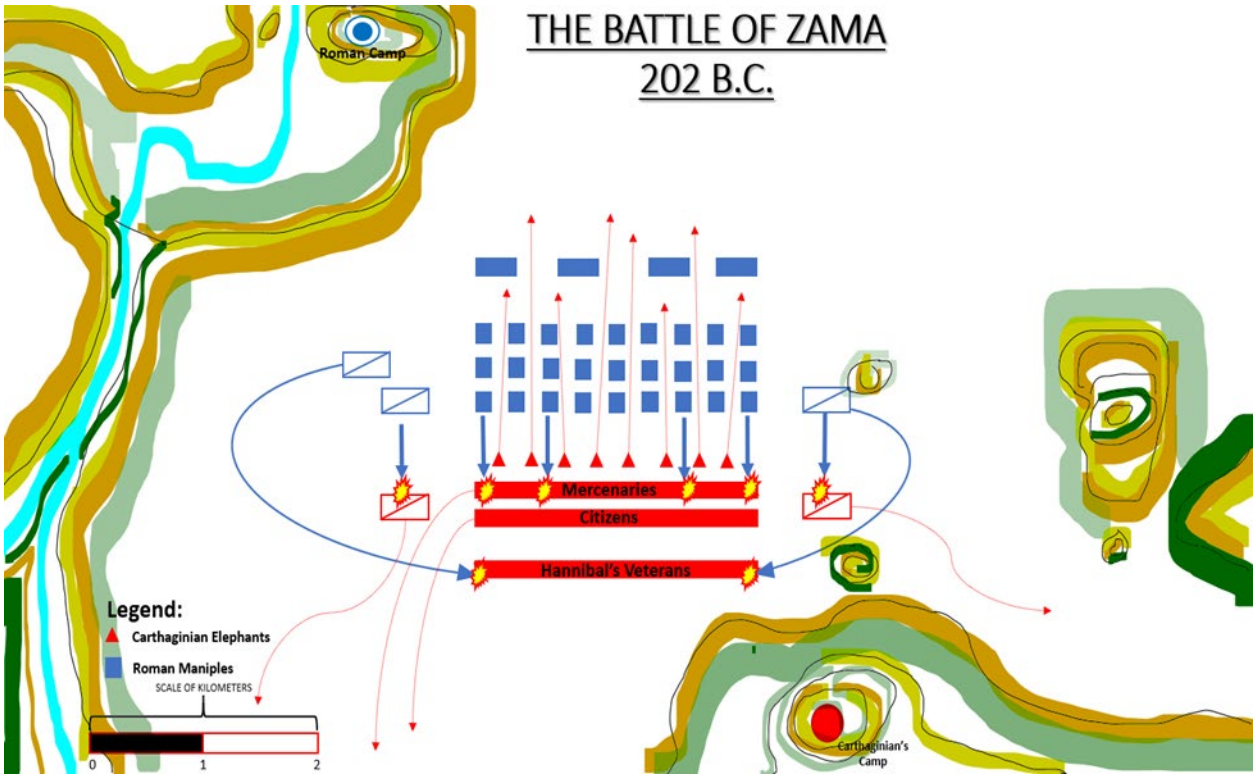

Figure 8. Scipio Defeats Hannibal

Source: Created by author based on Richard A. Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 186.

The crowning achievement of Scipio's military career was defeating Hannibal at Zama. The long string of defeats and then the glorious victories leading up to this point were a battlefield unto itself. The Senate and the Roman people were stymied with the fact that Hannibal was still free to roam Italy and do as he pleased. They were the biggest obstacle to understanding that to do away with the threat and embarrassment was to take

the offensive back to the Carthaginian homeland itself.[49] Scipio was elected Consul and assigned the command of Sicily, in which he would proactively address Africa (Carthage) "if it was required."[50] There was significant political opposition to attacking Carthage, as the Fabian side saw Hannibal in Italy as the threat, instead of seeing the root of the problem in Carthage.[51] There were also the changes that some in the Senate were not feeling comfortable about in regard to Rome expanding to be a player on the world stage and maintaining that position in order to provide security for itself internationally. This was evident in the unpreparedness of the Roman Senate to not only stay fixated on the short-term problem of Hannibal on the Italian peninsula, but in that the Senate did not allow Scipio the backing to raise new armies other than his consular army of approximately 10,000 men. He was, however, afforded lumber in which he built twenty quinqueremes and ten quadriremes.[52] With this schizophrenic foreign policy, fraught with political hazard at all turns, and with mixed support in terms of funding and authorities granted from the Senate, Scipio assumed his post in Sicily and prepared for the invasion of Africa.

The African invasion in 204 BCE by Scipio and his force of 31,000 troops/marines, 1,200 cavalry, forty warships and 400 troop/supply transport ships would

[49] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 140.

[50] Ibid., 139.

[51] Buckney, *Scipio Africanus*, 28-29.

[52] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 143.

start with the landing near Utica.[53] After an initial stalemate in trying to seize the Carthaginian strongpoint of Utica after forty days, he moved southwest while simultaneously conducting diplomacy in order to shore up his forces, namely cavalry, with Massinissa.[54] Scipio was nowhere close to perfect. With the failed attempt to capture an established supply base at Utica, he continued to flounder as he moved towards Carthage. There were some tactical victories, but they were offset by glaring lapses in strategy, namely, not securing the known strategic objective of Tunis.[55] Leading up to the Battle of the Great Plains, Scipio did not take the initiative after a critical victory in the burning of Hasdrubal's camps, where it is estimated that 40,000 died after it was discovered that the entire camp was made of wood and situated so that fire could spread easily.[56]

At the Battle of the Great Plains, Scipio surprised the Carthaginians in their panic to concentrate their forces after the loss of the fires.[57] Hasdrubal was induced into a fight and Scipio's forces were ready for a swift engagement. Because of new weapons and tactics that were proofed in the Spanish campaigns, and mostly because of the improved flexibility of the infantry, Scipio's legions and Massinissa's cavalry routed Hasdrubal's

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[53] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 144-145.

[54] Ibid., 145. Massinissa was a Numidian prince with a large and experienced cavalry.

[55] Ibid., 165-166. Tunis had a strategic port that was even more necessary for Scipio because of the resistance he encountered in the siege of Utica.

[56] Ibid., 165.

[57] Ibid., 167.

forces and exploited the victory until his logistics trains had caught up with him and he was on the doorstep of Tunis, the key to Carthage.[58] Upon arriving at Tunis, Scipio realized that there was no opposing force, but that the Carthaginian fleet had set sail in order to attack *his* base of operations. That delayed his occupation as he had his army moved back to support the remainder of the legions to defend against that attack. Upon the return to Tunis, there was still no opposition.[59]

Finally, Scipio was militarily and diplomatically in command. He was poised to attack Carthage while the Carthaginian Senate was suing for a truce. This could only mean that Hannibal was being recalled from Italy, and that the decisive battle that Scipio was looking for was imminent. In 203 BCE, Hannibal was selecting the troops that would accompany him back to Carthage. He wanted to take all of them but did not have the ships to take all the horses and men that were with him in Southern Italy at the time.[60] Scipio was re-arming and replenishing his men under truce with Carthage. More so, Scipio was moving towards Carthage and as Hannibal had just landed back in Africa. To press his enemy, Scipio was baiting Hannibal by raiding of the local townships and other small villages to come out to fight.[61]

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[58] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 166.

[59] Ibid., 171-172.

[60] Ibid., 175.

[61] Ibid., 179.

There was a personal meeting between the two generals prior to the battle where the two great leaders finally were able to cordially meet and discuss terms.[62] The meeting did not last long but it gave the two commanders the opportunity to size up each other, and they did not resolve any matters. Most likely, they did not want to. The final preparations were made, and the two armies clashed in the field outside of the town of Zama. After years of attrition at the hands of each country's ablest generals, the two most complete tactical and strategical minds in the known world at the time, finally were facing each other down. Hannibal's forces were comprised of eighty elephants and 55,000 infantry and cavalry. Scipio's forces numbered about 36,000 infantry and cavalry.[63] The battle was fierce and varied. When it was all done, the cavalry, led by Massinissa and Laelius crushed the rear of Hannibal's formations and it was over.[64] A temporary truce was negotiated, and Scipio returned to Rome in triumph, and was bestowed with the surname of *Africanus*.[65]

[62] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 182.

[63] Hart, *Scipio Africanus*, 177-178.

[64] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 197.

[65] Ibid., 199-201.

CHAPTER 3

SCIPIO AND THE APPLICATION OF THE TENETS

Tenet 1: Exceptional Personality

Looking at Scipio and what it meant to describe the exceptional personality qualities that he exuded, one sees the overwhelming trait of his positive attitude. The positive attitude that Scipio shows while in an ambush at Ticinus, and after his first attempt at battle being unsuccessful and his troop being forced to a non-contact position, what does he do? Scipio was not cringing in fear and trying to disengage from the battle, he was in his formation and most likely trying to reengage. Remembering that he was not in an all-encompassing position of power, he was also only seventeen, so he was a young 'lieutenant' in experience and stature on the battlefield. The totality of the ancient battlefield is also important. The literal fog of war along with the friction of the contrary elements that were going on around him contribute to how he was perceiving what to do while all of this was going on around him. The simple fact that Scipio could have any appreciation for the battlefield at all is remarkable in itself, but the ability to maintain an attitude of positivity so that he could clearly evaluate what was going on around him and then make any decisions is telling about his future as a combat commander. Looking at the instance that Polybius was describing, Scipio was observing the absolute pandemonium of the battle and saw his father in the distance, struggling for his life. He turned to his contingent and tried to rally them so that they would go into the fray with him. One can only imagine the fear that he had to overcome, not just within himself, but also in his troops that were watching the Carthaginian Army literally stomp on their comrades with war elephants. Then to put the exclamation on his call for rally to go to

their commander's aid, he turned his horse and charged himself. In that final act, he demonstrated that he was worthy of his words; he physically backed it up with true leadership borne of his attitude of positive force of will. It was not only his troops that saw this or even *felt* it. The enemy saw this and even though they were winning the battle, and almost had one of the two Consuls of Rome in their hands, they acquiesced to this seventeen-year old boy that charged toward them.

This was the not the only example of his attitude that translated into sheer bravery. Scipio maintained his force of personality throughout the duration of his 'education' as a young cavalry officer, but it was when he matured and was in command of armies that he showcased what he could offer as a commander via his exceptional personality. Upon the commission by the Senate to control the Iberian Peninsula, Scipio denigrated no one. He showed his quality by accepting the existing commander and by reaching out to the allies on the Spanish front. He rallied the defeated army by appealing to their self-worth and understanding that they were still worthy of the trust of Rome and of himself. This was not the only time there were examples of him in the field and encouraging his men. At Zama, after the *velite* ranks have suffered greatly, he rallied the men in the *hastii* and the *principei* so that they rejoined their ranks for the next and final onslaught of Hannibal's veteran line.[66]

[66] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 66-69. A description of the Roman Manipular Legion. The Legion was organized typically in ranks of different formations of troops with light, medium and heavy armament. The three ranks were fronted by the light troops of the *velites,* serving as skirmishers. The first rank was the *hastati*, which were comprised of a more seasoned and armored cadre. The second rank was staffed with the *principes,* who were the best soldiers in age and ability to form the center of the formation. The third rank, called the *triarii*, were armored as the *principes*, but were older

There are numerous examples of how Scipio never gave up and had the audacity to plan and execute so that his armies could believe in what was to be accomplished, or more succinctly, to see the plan via the end state that he had in mind. Scipio carried the air of success through engagement and confidence so that his men could share in it with action. He provided the example and then in accordance with their abilities, he executed boldly. Picking up on this, his armies were superior to the Carthaginian armies in that they believed in and fought for a man that is of proven worth and made them believe that they could have success.

Tenet 2: Exceptional Influence on Enemy and Friendly

First and foremost, Scipio's achievements in the Second Punic War were on a world-wide stage. His combat experiences were most always from the perspective of comparison with either a modern Army level or a Department. Therefore, his powers as Consul allowed him to act as not just the military arm, delivering due Roman justice to their enemies, but also as the state entity that would negotiate on behalf of the Senate. That means that Scipio was directly involved with the calculated wielding of the instruments of national power.

Dealing with expression of the instruments of national power or Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic (DIME), Scipio applied this system to his understanding of how to conduct war with an eye on the larger picture. Scipio may have

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and considered the last line of defense for the formation. The cavalry was positioned on each end. Maniples were made up of 120 men of two centuries of sixty men. These were aligned in a ten Maniple line to make up the *hastati* and *principe* lines. The last line of *triarii* were aligned with sixty men organized in a deeper formation. **After skirmish, the *velites* would withdraw to join the *triarii* formation in the rear.

had an understanding of a type of operational art where he could see the necessary steps to achieve the strategic objective. He also would have had an understanding of how a disjointed force would not because of the gap in tactical and operational understanding in the tiers of troops separated by class and station. In Scipio's perspective, coming from a family of high status and then seeing the disparity of the formation of the troops according to station, he may have also seen the need to execute influence in order to share an understanding of the link between the tactical and the strategic in the lower ranks so that a shared concept of the objectives were a motivating force that presented a cohesive team under his example.

The troops were recruited and organized with the wealthiest citizens being in the cavalry. The infantry, however, was organized into three divisions of standard formation with the entirety of a legion consisting of approximately 4,200 infantry with 300 cavalry. The infantry formed the main body of a deployed legion formation and the center was composed of the *Hastati* (1,200), *Principes* (1,200) and *Triarii* (600).[67] These divisions were augmented by light troops, used primarily as recon and skirmishers called *Velites*.[68] Remembering that at that time, Rome did not have a standing army and had to recruit armies when the Senate needed them, the armament of these troops was directly related to where they would serve in the army, i.e., Scipio could afford the horse, training and equipment so, as with most sons of wealthy landowners, he was part of the cavalry.[69]

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[67] Buckney, *Scipio Africanus*, 3.

[68] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 64-69. *Velites* could also be used coupled with cavalry in the recon role.

[69] Buckney, *Scipio Africanus*, 3-5.

Hannibal had what he brought in terms of allies and conquered territories. His army was made up of allies, such as the Numidians that provided cavalry for his formation, and of impressed infantrymen. For Scipio to see this disparity in the overall make-up of the opposing army would not have been shocking or even uncommon but it would, perhaps, explain why the enemy allowed him to make a charge at Ticinus to save his father. More importantly, what Scipio would have seen from Hannibal was that he had several allies that were part of his formations. That was where he was exposed to some of the structure of the Tenet 2.

In regard to DIME, Hannibal and the Carthaginians get an unfair turn in popular history. The first view anyone hears about when talking about Hannibal is that he is the *invader,* the *conqueror,* the *barbarian.* From a modern point of view, that might be true. He did invade and indeed, conquer, but from the view of the world then it is not quite accurate. The Carthaginians were not a blood-thirsty rabble bent on burning the world. They were a world power trying to gain leverage after a defeat that seriously crippled their system of government, and economy, and a natural enemy of Rome. After the First Punic War, Carthage was defeated by Rome, largely because Rome could build and man sufficient sea-power to project that defeat and to exploit those successes to conquer Carthaginian centers of gravity, namely it's navy. Fast forward to BCE 218 and find Hannibal capable of providing the example to Scipio of how to build a coalition force in order to attack Rome in northern Italy. Celts, indigenous Spanish tribes, and also some Roman citizens, or at least Roman subjects, were a part of his army after he crossed the Alps and attacked the Roman army at Ticinus. This example that Scipio would have observed was a force multiplier for Hannibal in the Roman defeat there. Diplomatically,

the need for coalition, especially in regard to building an army, was imperative when there is no conscription. Also, it probably did not escape Scipio that an international force was now threatening Rome itself. That would have engendered ideas on how to cobble together an effective force that could be reckoned with.

Diplomatic efforts were also part of the overall strategy that Scipio continued to expand upon during and up to his greatest victory in the Second Punic War. From the time that he was preparing and then landed near Utica in his invasion of North Africa, he was extending his interior lines by reaching out to possible coalition partners that once were enemies. This example is the support that he sought, and temporarily had, with the Numidian, Syphax.[70] But the most impact that Scipio had in using this instrument was when he negotiated the end of hostilities with Carthage after the fall of Hannibal at Zama. The deal offered Carthage was to maintain its status as an independent nation under Rome's rule with no troops garrisoned there. They would be "friends."[71] They would not go to war, except defensively, without the permission of Rome. All prisoners of war were to be surrendered as well as all of its warships to be burned, except ten triremes. Importantly, all the war elephants would be surrendered, and they were barred from training any new ones. Last, but not least, Carthage would pay Rome an annual payment

[70] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 144. Syphax a Numidian contemporary of Massinissa and the most valuable ally in the region had long supported the Carthaginian cause. He briefly conceded to coming to Scipio's cause in the plans for invasion but went back to the Carthaginian side after Hasdrubal offered his daughter, Sophonisba to him for marriage.

[71] Ibid., 199.

for the next fifty years of ten-thousand talents.[72] His approach was none other than "Scipio-esqe" in fairness and in the rational approach that he negotiated with the Carthaginian Senate. He applied common sense and understanding that this powerful country and its government is better a defeated vassal, capable of producing for Rome as part of its greater territories than as a burned spot in the North African landscape. This was much to the chagrin of the Roman Senate, namely Cato, (not a fan of Scipio), who for years pined after a greater realization of revenge and who finally got it at the end of the Third Punic War, when Carthage was literally wiped off the map.[73]

In all, it is demonstrated that Scipio's sense of the situation can be brought to bear in diplomatic terms without turning a blind eye to the political and simply using brute force in order to obtain short term objectives. While it can be argued that the terms offered after Zama may not have been perfect, the recognition by Scipio and the forethought to act in a just manner diplomatically is a key insight to his completeness as a combat commander.

The most prevalent lesson from the point of the informational to Scipio would have been the sheer lack of adequate information. Whether the Roman Army was operating on current intelligence or just hoping to gather it along the way, for use in operations, is unclear. P.C.S. did send out his *velites* with some cavalry to make a large sweep to look for Hannibal's forces when it was clear that they were not in Massilia. He

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[72] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 200.

[73] Ibid., 200-201, 229. Marcus Porcius Cato was a staunch opponent of Scipio in the Roman Senate and tried for many years to subvert everything that Scipio accomplished.

was caught along the banks of the river when the first action took place prior to the main fight at the river Ticinus. It seemed that Hannibal was more effective in receiving his intelligence and information from that one small engagement than P.C.S. was. The lightning bolt of realization would have struck in that there was a need for *actionable* information. Later on, when Scipio was named Consul at age 26 and moved on Hannibal's forces in Spain, he used the information he gathered through local means while also engaging in some deception. Further, as Scipio matured and was prosecuting Hannibal in his invasion of Africa, he showed that he intended to broaden his base of support by reaching out diplomatically to other nations in the hope of gaining allies. He did this and more as he ascertained success and ultimately, showed his diplomatic prowess in the handling of the defeat of Hannibal at Zama. Scipio negotiates a peace that is undeniably fair and balanced in order to reach the objectives of Rome and ensure that Carthage is not a threat in the future.[74] Although over-ridden by the Roman Senate later, Scipio showed a glimpse of the modern general with a sense of understanding that not even the likes of Cato could comprehend in terms of fairness and equanimity in a global context.[75]

The abilities of Scipio to act on information was key to his successes in Africa. There were lapses in controlling information that could have had consequences as well. The incident of Locri, almost derailed the entirety of the North African invasion and sent

[74] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 198-201.

[75] Ibid., 200.

Scipio home in chains.[76] Scipio was in Locri to support his *legatus pro praetore,* his delegated governing authority Quintus Pleminius, after Quintus ordered Scipio's own Tribunes scourged and then murdered.[77] The political reasons for Scipio to deal with this personally were most likely because Scipio threatened the famous Senator and former Consul Fabius, by his appointment as Consul. Moreover, Scipio was a target in the Senate because of his success and questions about unrest in his ranks might of derailed his planned invasion of Africa. What is clear is that this uncontrolled information "leak" sparked an inquiry that resulted in an investigation and a hearing in the Roman Senate.[78] All of this was because of the lack of understanding of the way that Scipio did not control the information that Rome and his political enemies were using anything negative against him for their own gain. Scipio was at least aware of how information could be helpful in deceiving the enemy and, after Locri, aware that information not controlled completely could be used as a weapon against him. In this usage in his operations, and also being a victim of it and almost ending his military career, he showed that he did have an understanding of this instrument of power.

The military lessons could not have been clearer for Scipio. His basic education as a boy was exponentially increased when he first joined his father, Publius Cornelius Scipio, for his first action facing Hannibal at the Battle of Ticinus. In this battle, Scipio may have had the first realization that Rome had an organizational and tactical problem.

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[76] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 149-150.

[77] Ibid., 147-149.

[78] Ibid., 149.

The questions that he might have asked first were: 1) why were they always attacking uphill? 2) Why were they always surprised in some way in every battle? 3) why was the Roman Army losing these battles when they were supposed to be superior in every way?

The first answer was part of the superiority of the opposing commander. Hannibal was a superb commander. In fact, in most of the engagements through the Second Punic War, Hannibal did several things as standard operating procedure that ensured his success both operationally and tactically.[79] Carthaginian armies used terrain as a weapon. They did not offer battle unless the terrain suited them. That usually meant that the opponent would always be fighting uphill. This simple method is extremely effective when troops are carrying upwards of fifty to seventy pounds of weapons and gear marching many miles to reach the battlegrounds. Conversely, attacking with gravity increased the Carthaginian forces impact as it crashed through the phalanx, prevalent in Roman tactics. It gave the extra edge to his forces to be successful. The second question that Scipio most likely pondered was how the Roman armies were surprised by some aspect in every battle. The most likely culprit was, again, Hannibal, but it goes deeper than that. At the time of Scipio, generalship had not been quite perfected. "Generals" were appointed because of social or political standing and were typically elected political leaders in the Senate who won fame and glory from winning battles in which they directly participated.[80] That alone is not a bad thing and sometimes, like when Scipio saved his father at Ticinus, is needed. When the commander tunnels in on the fight and loses

[79] Hart, *Scipio Africanus*, 21.

[80] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 69.

perspective of the entirety of the operation, the outcome or the end state, the reason for the commander is lost.

Additionally, there are basic principles of war that a veteran commander tries to use in the conduct of a campaign. Among these is the element of surprise. The army of Sempronius charged head-long through the cold water at Ticinus to attack the Carthaginians in a rash attempt at a frontal attack victory. With sober clarity of the tactical situation and a firm grasp of the principles of warfare, Hannibal had carefully planned that his brother Mago take a contingent of men around the night before and wait in the swamp for the right time to strike the rear of the Roman army to assist in the attack after the flank was exposed and the line was broken.

There is also the question of availability of veteran commanders. When the general is in the middle of the battle, odds will favor that many of these appointed generals will not last through those battles. Rome had a real problem with leadership that could be counted on to mature. The ability to command and remain in control of forces for the larger battle was what Scipio learned and that influence of seeing how the army was defeated made an indelible mark on how Scipio developed.

In answering the third question, Scipio did not have an answer until he was appointed Consul and sent to Spain much later. The question was borne of a mix of frustration and ignorance. Because of all the factors of military ignorance, incorrect attribution of diplomatic efforts, and the general policy of walking on the field in a great uniform thinking that alone was to win the day, the Roman army was bound to keep repeating the same mistakes, at least until Scipio was given his chance at leadership.

Scipio's ascension to command the army that invaded Africa was the capstone to his military career in that he was ready to put into place all of the lessons he had learned and developed unto that time. Everything that he gained, in terms of understanding in Spain, from the experimentation and adoption of new weapons, such as the gladius, to the incorporation of these weapons into new tactical maneuver with the *hasiti*, *principes*, and the *triarii*. The use of cavalry in delaying and then augmenting the infantry as a bid for success in pressing the advantage and exploiting gaps that become available during combat was also a new tactic that Scipio brought to the fight. Scipio was of the mind to experiment and then hone these lessons in order to face the known quantity of the enemy.[81] His ability to adapt and then inspire his subordinate commanders and troops alike to see the effectiveness in his ideas is his most important addition to military history and ultimately to the survival of Rome.

In the end, Scipio's education from the first days at Ticinus all the way through Zama, Scipio was able to see the need for change and then place his army in a position to adopt new measures that could be reinforced with success in utilizing these new ideas. Further, he was not just a creature of one aspect of the instruments of power because he demonstrated a mastery of the military within the construct of how it played a part in the overall strategy of what was to be accomplished for the state. There is no doubt that Scipio most likely reveled in the times when he harnessed the inner-eye, but ultimately he personified his success and sacrifice by refusing the statues and titles. He also was able to

[81] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 101. Scipio's adaptation of new weapons, such as the gladius (a short-pointed sword for use as a close-quarters weapon), 68-69. Explanation of the Manipular Legion.

refuse the temptation of using his military successes to support his political ambition.[82] Scipio was a master of the military and in its use has provided the foremost example of a combat leader.

The influence of economics and its use as a tool probably was not learned in this early period as much as after Cannae and when Scipio's father was killed in Spain.[83] In the early part of his learning, he would have seen the disparity within his own army but that would not have resonated as using international economics as part of war strategy does later on in his career when he is charged with going to Africa to attack Carthage directly. In several instances though, it seems that Scipio was keenly aware of the ability to control certain military outcomes from the control of trade. Scipio's use of naval blockade and the awareness to invest in manufacturing by control and direction of skilled artisans and craftsmen to build unique capability for his army, (such as was seen in the production and the incorporation of the gladius), and then outright manipulation as when he demanded tribute from Carthage, that would put their economic output at a disadvantage and strain in order to pay for recompense at the end of the war when negotiations were taking place with Rome.[84]

The vitality of his efforts to raise armies outside of the assistance of Rome was an insight into how Scipio was able to understand his own government and how they were very comfortable with sending their generals to raise armies and to fight on their behalf,

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[82] Clausewitz, *On War*, 102; Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, xvi; Buckney, *Scipio Africanus*, 54-55.

[83] Ibid., 9.

[84] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 175-177.

but not to outwardly support these efforts. To anyone else, this was a stab in the back, but to Scipio, this was expected. His demeanor was not to have the Senate subservient to his wishes, no matter how he saw the threat. He knew that the nature of politicians was always to be wary of any military cause unless it advanced a personal agenda that would bring prestige to them, for a time, and then it would be considered an enemy. Scipio was mindful of this and it was almost with sadness that he recognized this when debating in the Senate with Fabius on the merits of invading Africa.[85] He could have attacked the weakness of the arguments from Fabius from a personal standpoint, but he restrained himself. Economically, Scipio's political restraint was matched by his ability to take what the Senate was able to give and then produce results in the terms of victory, which was recognized by the Senate as well.

A combat commander has to recognize the importance of economics in regard to the enemy as well as the support from his own base. Political theater from adversaries such as Cato and Fabius were probably frustrating to Scipio but he did not allow that to deter him from acquiring what he needed in order to obtain his objectives. Scipio understood that he also was able to dictate subjugation after victory by the use of economics. In understanding and applying this instrument of power allowed him to deliver the objectives of both the defeat of Carthaginian forces in Spain and the in the deliverance of the ultimate goal of Carthage itself.

[85] Hart, *Scipio Africanus*, 90-91.

Tenet 3: Progressive Military Success

As with any career in the military profession, learning the art of command and officership is just that, *learning*. Not all that start out on the journey in this profession are capable of the intricacies of the understanding that endeavoring to become better means that pride has to take a back seat to the grind of gaining experience. Translated: most defeats are the best instructors. Scipio was no different. His first lesson came when he was a young lieutenant of cavalry in the army commanded by his father.

Scipio was driven by many emotions on that day at Ticinus; the strongest one was enticed by watching his father struggle for his life. Instead of cowering, as the other troops did, he rose to try to embolden them to action. Remarkably, he did not act with a seventeen-year-old's reckless impetus or passion. He had the sense to try to bring the team together, so the argument of rashness does not hold so much as the argument that Polybius made with his writing that Scipio was able to lift himself out of the fog long enough to see the danger, rally his forces, and to attack.[86] That, in a word, is courage.

Interestingly enough, that is not the whole story. After the battle, his father recommended him for the *Corona Civica*, of which he refused.[87] He certainly deserved it, and his men certainly understood that he did because they were all there when he rallied them and made the decision to charge. It can be argued that Scipio may have well believed that he did not deserve it because it was his father that he was saving, and therefore, anyone would have done that. He is even quoted as saying "The action was one

[86] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 8-9.

[87] Ibid., 9. The *Corona Civica* was the highest Roman military award for bravery.

that rewarded itself."[88] Was that what he meant? Looking at the entirety of what is known about him, Scipio advanced in his maturity and his probity. Of course, he wanted to save his father. Of course, he wanted to be a factor in a battle. Like any other young man in the military in a war, he wanted to make a difference and do heroic things to prove to his family and himself of his bravery and manhood. But what other way to do this than to come home with a medal that is a testament to that accomplishment? The act of refusing to accept the award was more calculated for him. It was obvious that he loved his father, but it was more obvious that he was showing that he was also righteous in his character. In examining the calculated versus the righteous, Scipio indeed showed far more of righteousness in his actions involving courage than that of someone that was acting with an ulterior motive. He proved that his courage was not just acted out when there were literal legions that support his decisions. He channeled Cincinnatus by refusing all the political trappings that could give him extended opportunity in the political realm, as discussed earlier.[89] This was further supported towards the end of his life, when he did not contest charges that were brought against him by Cato of being complicit in an alliance with Antiochus.[90] Although he most likely was disgusted by the

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[88] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 9.

[89] N. S. Gill, "Biography of Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, Roman Statesman," ThoughtCo, 6 May 2019, accessed 29 March 2020, accessed 29 March 2020, https://www.thoughtco.com/lucius-quinctius-cincinnatus-120932. Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519-430 BCE) was best known as the ideal servant-leader. He was appointed Dictator in order to quell rebellion in and around Rome around 462 B.C.E. After his duty was discharged, he returned to his farm.

[90] Hart, *Scipio Africanus*, 222-243. Cato's faction in the Senate, that was opposed to the Scipio family, charged Scipio's brother Lucius Scipio, of taking a bribe from Antiochus III. Lucius was elected Consul in order to attack Greece and root out Hannibal

accusations by Cato and the others in the Senate who coveted his exploits and military achievements, he did not do anything to overtly recognize those charges. His courage to address the Senate and point out that the day the hearing was held in Rome was an anniversary of the battle of Zama was enough. Foiled by Scipio's unshakable courage and belief in himself, the opponents were left standing in the Senate alone while the majority followed Scipio to the temple to pay homage to the gods in remembering that fateful day.

There are many forms of courage. The modern battlefield is not immune to the wonders and horrors of war and there is courage there, absolutely. In the time that Scipio lived, and starting at the young age that he was responsible for not only his life, but scores of thousands it is hard to imagine the level of courage it had to take in order to be successful. Seeing other generals in that period, such as Fabius or Sempronius, they did not see that courage displayed through action without regard to the greater machinations of things on much more strategic levels was myopic. Scipio's achievements in light of physical courage being only one aspect of each and every encounter is hard to compare with a modern example. Modern generals hardly, if ever, command from the battlefield and never from the front. They have the luxury of time to think while employing stratagems and tactics that take into account larger cause and effect. To do it while physically maneuvering forces and fighting is something to ponder that will defy a modern military mind. Scipio's ability to do this while simultaneously being motivated only for the advancement of his government is remarkable and is another reason why he was a great combat commander.

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from Antiochus' court. Cato was opposed to the terms that Scipio Africanus had made with Carthage and his feelings carried for the Scipio family extended to Lucius.

There is no doubt that the progressive success upon which Scipio built his career as a commander started out in the school of failure. For one, he survived the lessons of Trebia and Cannae. More importantly, he was able to synthesize the lessons of other commanders, including his father and uncle, into lessons that aided him in the decisions he would have to make in later engagements. What is also important was his ability to credit his opponent with tactics that were successful and to combine those tactics in order to deduce his enemy's center of gravity and then apply those enhancements to his tactics in order to ensure victory. The culmination of this is seen at Zama. Fighting an old foe, Hannibal, Scipio successfully turned the tables on Hannibal by using improvised techniques. He selected the terrain in which to give battle which blunted the main offensive weapon of the enemy, his elephants. This led Hannibal into the tactical objective of being trapped in an envelopment. Zama is the pinnacle of ancient warfare in the execution of a winning plan with outstanding results featuring two top tactical commanders. Most importantly, it was the culmination of a lifetime of study and practice by Scipio that resulted in the victory over Rome's most prolific opponent.

Tenet 4: Enduring Legacy

At the start, Scipio was on the losing team. Not just at Ticinus, but also at the battle of Trebia, Lake Trasimene, and then Cannae. Rome and Scipio's battlefield success was not experienced for the next decade. Hannibal was the master instructing Scipio. In learning the lessons of Hannibal, Scipio adopted and incorporated this new knowledge into his logic of how to wage war. For example, after crossing the Alps and defeating P.C.S. at Ticinus and Sempronius at Trebia, Hannibal began by studying his next enemy, Gaius Flaminius. By the account of Polybius and Livy, Flaminius was purported to be a

man that was prone to anger and "impetuous acts."[91] Hannibal baited Flaminius at the Battle of Lake Trasimene and played on his proclivities to annoy him, so that he was off-balance in the fight, as Hannibal lured him into battle and annihilated him.[92] What Scipio would have observed in the actions of Flaminius was one of a general that was out of his depth and being played by a superior military mind. Up to this point, as the third battle since Hannibal had crossed the Alps into northern Italy, were two-thousand dead at Ticinus, thirty-thousand dead at Trebia, fifty one-thousand dead at Lake Trasimene, and Hannibal was still moving south.[93] How can all of this defeat translate to the Tenet of Battlefield Success for Scipio? Scipio was there and a part of the battle. Being a cavalry officer, he was in a unique position to observe the formations and how each of the components of each army were brought to bear. These experiences allowed Scipio to learn how the enemy commander conducted his armies in their order of battle, how his philosophy of the use of the cavalry was put into action, how deception and influence complemented with tactical maneuver and, most importantly, how the Roman Army responded to being presented with unique combat circumstances on the field. No other commander of the Roman Army was in as receptive as he was to have the first-hand lessons of victory. He possessed the military genius required to not just recognize the defeat but understand the lesson of the defeat and bring about the methodology, when he did get the command opportunity, to exercise it and turn it into victory. Victory for

[91] Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 39-40.

[92] Ibid., 39-43.

[93] Ibid., 43.

Scipio, however, would have to wait. Rome was not done being taught a lesson to by the "schoolmaster" Hannibal.

It is a known fact that Scipio, after being given his first command, was never defeated in battle. This ability was honed in the maturation during his participation in some of Rome's most humiliating defeats. Scipio applied lessons learned and made the adjustments necessary that when he did have command, he was able to exercise repeated battlefield success.

Tenet Synthesis

Scipio Africanus was one of the best commanders at exercising combat leadership. In regard to the prescribed four tenets, his example of a combat commander has gone through all levels of age, education, and experience and have stood the test of time. His application of each of the Tenets is without question, and it is a wonder why he is lost in history when comparisons are made of other, lesser commanders that did not have his record or experience. In his first experience in combat as a young cavalry officer of seventeen, he showed remarkable courage when he saw his father surrounded and the battle was lost. He was able to rally a panicked squad in order to rush in, and in the process, intimidate the enemy forces that were closing in on their prize. Scipio further showed remarkable poise in refusing the accolades after the battle, something that would be a mainstay of his character as he refused adoration after the battle of Zama. These two examples in themselves show the exceptional personality that he had. Couple this with his political successes and his overall appeal to the fickle Roman masses, and the bedrock of his astonishing career was formed.

In concentrating on his influence in both the enemy and friendly areas, his constant outward look and positivity as described is again evidenced in his actions as he brings organizational change to his first command in Spain. Scipio used the strength of the other commanders and indigenous tribes to assist in a perilous situation where intelligence was shaky, and alliances were not certain. He projected confidence and competence while maneuvering his forces in North Africa and brokering alliances with Massinissa and Syphax. He was a trusted and competent ally of the people of Rome and was recognized as such by many in the Senate.

Scipio was aware and a willing participant in the use of the Instruments of National Power in order to obtain his objectives, not for the sake of conquering for Rome, but to add to Rome's glory. His expert analysis of combat and political situations showed a progression of success that he cloned in action time and time again. He wielded these instruments of the Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic, to not only assist him in charting out the operational environment but as tools to shape the outlook of battle so that the compliant were brought under the vassalage of Rome and the obstinate destroyed. Scipio learned from the school grounds of Ticinus, Trebia, Lake Trasimene and Cannae so that when it came his turn, he would take the battle to the enemy's gates and confront the school master, Hannibal.

In all, Scipio Africanus showed one of the earliest examples of what a great combat leader should be. There was no arrogance in conquering for personal glory, but only for the sake of the betterment of his country and system of government. His enduring legacy is overshadowed by only time, but when unearthed in examination, Scipio's meteoric rise as a paragon of combat leadership is unquestioned. His legacy is

much more than his success on the world stage; it is one of genius without pretention to where he garnered the respect and admiration of friend and foe alike. In all, Scipio Africanus is the model of the modern commander acting in his capacity as a military and diplomatic professional in a superb example of servitude to a nation and loyalty to the ideal that was Rome that became the democratic powers that we see in the modern age.

CHAPTER 4

ERWIN ROMMEL

The time period that Erwin Rommel comes into the world was a defining period for the fledgling nation that would last for the next half-century. The German Empire was declared in 1871, and the smaller kingdoms that made up the new nation came together in a new tradition to invest power in the old Prussian monarchy to raise an overall Emperor, the Kaiser, that commanded the Imperial Army.[94] There was a sense of national pride that had matriculated through the townships and the old kingdoms that had borne the brunt of the Franco-Prussian War, and its glorious resolution at Austerlitz and evolved into the nation of Germany. Rommel, a boy of natural gifts, was considered normal in that he showed no unnatural intelligence or interests at an early age. He was born of a father and mother that took pride in their cultural background as *Swabians* and of them they represented a working-class and local noble background of a former artillery officer, then a school teacher, and a devoted mother.[95] They valued hard work (they proudly referred to themselves as peasants) and were characterized as being "cunning, canny and clever."[96] All had a notion of loyalty to the local sovereign and then to a greater

[94] David Fraser, *Knight's Cross: A Life of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel* (Great Britain: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 8.

[95] Ibid., 7-8.

[96] Daniel Allen Butler, *Field Marshal: The Life and Death of Erwin Rommel* (Philadelphia, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2015), 26-27.

commander, the Kaiser, under whom the notion of the "Fatherland" was taking root.[97] This was the atmosphere of newness and direction that the young Rommel was born into. He was one of four children, the eldest son, with early aspirations for service as almost his only desire. His parents encouraged his commitment to the military profession, to which the obligation was seen as a tradition and cheerfully carried out as a privilege, until the age of forty-five.[98] The matter of time, in terms of enlistment, did not matter to Erwin as he was more concerned with the applications and acceptance of the *Kriegsschule* in Danzig. He was accepted and joined the 124th Wurttemberg Infantry Regiment in July 1910 as a cadet. After considerable work in the expected phases that were required to "prove your worth" to the other officers in the unit and after recommendation, in March 1911, he was sent to the *Konigiche Kriegsschule* in Danzig.[99] After much hard work and surviving the strict regimen of the academy, Rommel was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in January 1912 and returned to his barracks in the 124th Regiment.[100]

Rommel moved to his next post in the Imperial German Army and started a term as an instructor of enlisted soldiers and officers in Ulm, close to his home.[101] On 28 June

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[97] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 9.

[98] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 8-9.

[99] Ibid., 11-12.

[100] Ibid., 12.

[101] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 33.

1914, the event of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie's assassination started a military career unparalleled in German history.[102]

Defining Military Experiences: WWI

Bleid

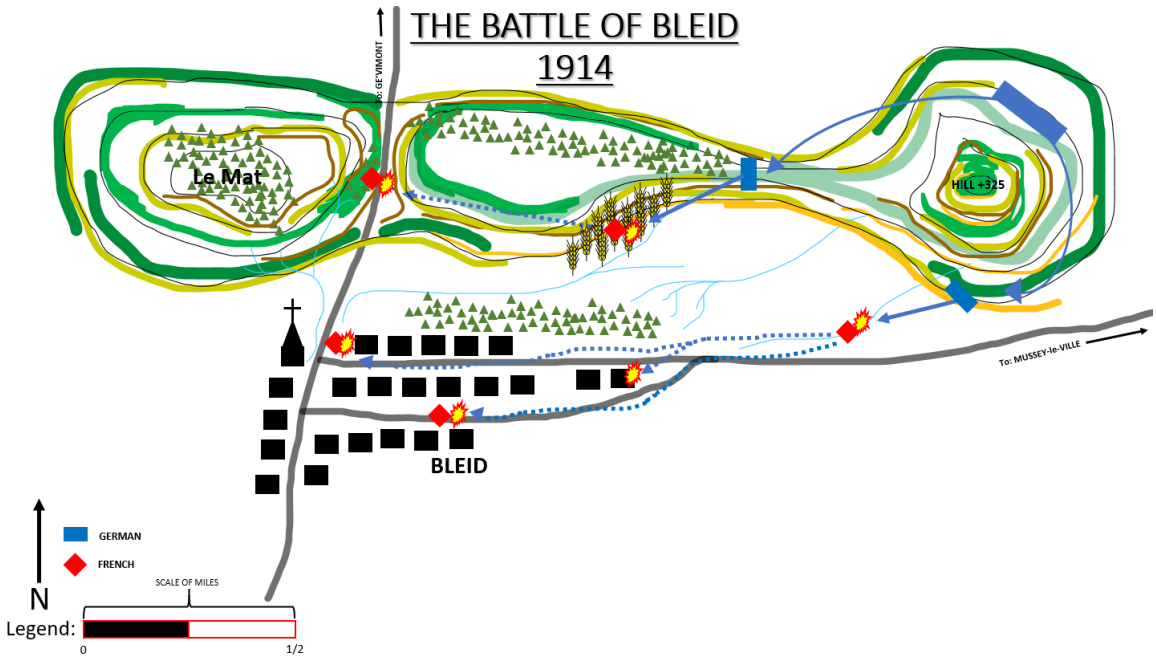

Figure 9. Rommel's First Action Showing Bravery and Audacity

Source: Created by author based on Erwin Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, trans. Gustave E. Kiddé (1944; repr. San Bernardino, CA: Snowball Publishing, 2014), 11.

In March of 1914, Rommel's request to transfer from an artillery unit to an infantry unit placed him in the 7th Company, 124th Infantry.[103] This would set the stage

[102] Ibid., 34-35.

[103] Erwin Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, trans. Gustave E. Kiddé (1944; repr. San

for his first combat leadership action at the village of Bleid.[104] The actions of Rommel and the handful of German troops that were with him on his reconnaissance of the town ahead of the main body of Major Bader's II Battalion, were a defining point in understanding the tenacity that Rommel had in looking at a tactical problem.[105] The fog that hung low on the ground that day prevented the direct visual assessment of the enemy disposition, and Rommel moved with caution but with purpose.[106] He ultimately spotted the enemy and made the rationalization that surprise and speed were the tools that he had to overwhelm a superior number in a situation that did not necessarily require that he engage the enemy. That did not mean that he was unnecessarily making a wrong choice, but it is worth considering that his mission was to conduct the way ahead and to detail the position of the enemy for the larger force, not to gain an maintain contact as the vanguard of the battalion. This is important because seeing a young Rommel decide to exploit opportunity, because he had audacity, surprise and speed on his enemy, without any guidance other than more of a strategic understanding of fighting the war, this action shaped him as a commander. It is further important to understand that at this time, Rommel was still relatively young, in his early twenties, in the first action that he had sole control over, and not concerned with other higher objectives. That is not to say that he did not take his orders seriously, he did, but it showed the penchant to act on mission-

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Bernardino, CA: Snowball Publishing, 2014), 1.

[104] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 44-45.

[105] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 6-7.

[106] Ibid., 7.

type orders in the tactical sense as opposed to the understanding and acting with an operational mindset. This explains why he was so famous and why his reputation has lasted so long as the committed and aggressive source of nightmares for the Allied powers in World War II. For now, Rommel was applying principles of war to the small situations he found, starting with Bleid. As he acted on his surprise of the small French Army Garrison and ultimately, with the arrival of II Battalion, cleared out the village. He noted in his memoirs, *Infanterie Greift An* or, *Infantry Attacks,* the cost of war.[107] This recognition of the cost in lives and destruction set up some of the myth that later surrounded him.[108] However, it is important to recognize that Rommel was starting to compartmentalize the effects of what war did to a person and he gains the reputation that he was personally abhorrent to the carnage, it did not deter him from future battlefield accomplishment in which he was the chief protagonist of the destruction.

Rommel suffered his first of many wounds on 24 September near Varennes-en-Argonne. He was shot during a hand-to-hand battle in which he had run out of ammunition in an engagement with five French soldiers. After evacuation, surgery and three months of rehabilitation, he received the Iron Cross, Second Class. He also used this event to coin the now-classic quote of, "In a man-to-man fight, the winner is he who has one more round in his magazine."[109] This wounding would not deter Rommel from the fight for very long. After three months of recovery and light duty, he was back with II

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[107] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 46-47.

[108] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 549 -557.

[109] Rommel, Infantry Attacks, 50.

Battalion, 124th Infantry and was rewarded with the command of 9th Company.[110] The battlefield was starting to shape into what was recognized as the battlefield of WWI with trenches being emplaced and constant artillery barrages followed by men rushing into open areas that were usually covered by more artillery and machine gun emplacements that covered masses of barbed wire.

"Central Position" Argonne Forrest

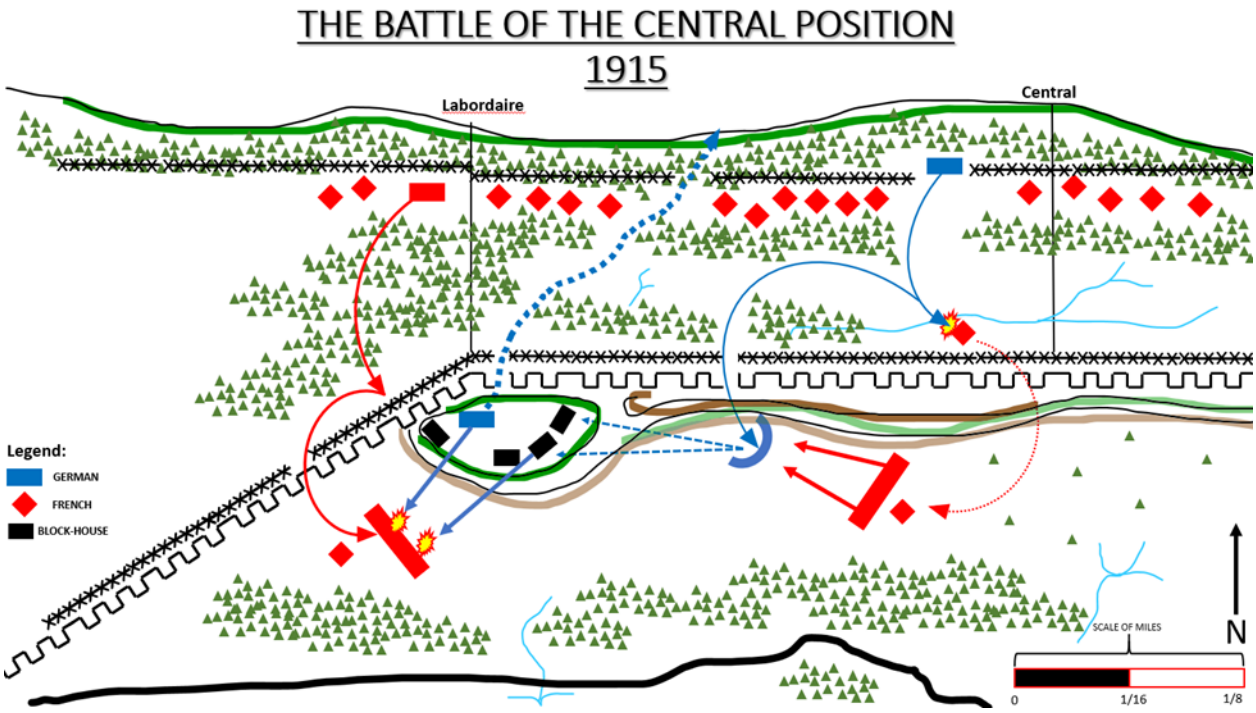

Figure 10. Rommel Takes Calculated Tactical Advantage to Exploit the Enemy's Weakness

Source: Created by author based on Erwin Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, trans. Gustave E. Kiddé (1944; repr. San Bernardino, CA: Snowball Publishing, 2014), 69.

[110] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 48.

In late January 1915, Rommel, in an area just outside Verdun, was in the offensive with 9th Company moving to attack a French position in the hope that a salient could be opened and force momentum for the German Army in this critical area of the line. In what is seen now as standard for Rommel, he pushed his company forward, using terrain and force of will to a point where he would have to make a decision that would challenge both his men and the battalion. After being alerted that his position could not be covered by support from the battalion that was at least a half-mile away and in its own precarious position, Rommel decided that the only course of action was to order his company to cross several barbed wire obstacles and open area in order to attack a blockhouse position that was occupied by the French.[111] It was a tell-tale sign, for later in his career Rommel showed his willingness to place the tactical over the operational. Looking past the fear that at least one of his platoon commanders showed, he forced success even though he was alerted to pull back because he could not be supported.[112] Eventually, Rommel made the decision to withdraw as French artillery pounded their position. There is something to be said for how Rommel interpreted his orders to halt his attack and how his company was utilized by II Battalion. It seems that Rommel saw his command as the vanguard of a larger movement, so in that context, it could be argued that Rommel did have a sense of the operational implications of his unit regarding to how it was a small piece in the larger play of the battalion in the overall operation. However, readers are only privy to the tactical through his account in *Infantry Attacks.*

[111] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 49-50.

[112] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 59-61.

Understanding that in that account, Rommel painted that he had a grip of the larger plan, or at least its implications, but what does come out that is more enlightening was his overwhelming desire to win. At no time did Rommel ever look at a situation as hopeless. He was always looking for the edge on the opponent. At this critical time in his development as a combat officer, Rommel was dedicated, almost fanatical, about his approach to combat. This bedrock of character as a combat leader was always prevalent with Rommel and was most likely the key to understanding the man and why he was loved and disparaged throughout his military career.

Rommel was soon posted to the new *Wuertembergische Gebirgs-Battalion*, or Wurttemberg Mountain Battalion, after his promotion to *oberleutnant*, First Lieutenant. This new unit was a harken back to the Prussian and Bavarian Jager battalions that were scouts and akin to the recon units of today.[113] This unit was referred to as the, *Mountain Battalion*, of which Rommel was placed as a company commander of 2nd Company, and the battalion was eventually absorbed into the *Alpenkorps* that faced the Romanians, who had declared war on the Central Powers on 27 August 1916.[114] After a short period of success, the Romanians were driven back and the Mountain Battalion had relieved the passes of Vulcan and Skurduk so that the Austrians and the Germans could maintain control of movement in the region.[115]

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[113] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 51.

[114] Ibid., 52-53.

[115] Ibid., 56.

A time of two weeks elapsed after the victory against the Romanians, in which Rommel was able to take leave and return to Danzig to marry Lucia Mollin, "Lucie." He had fallen in love with her while in Danzig in 1912 and continually written to her during these first stages of his career as he would for the rest of his life. She, more than any one person, was a witness to his desires and his complaints throughout their marriage, as well as his service.

Mount Cosna

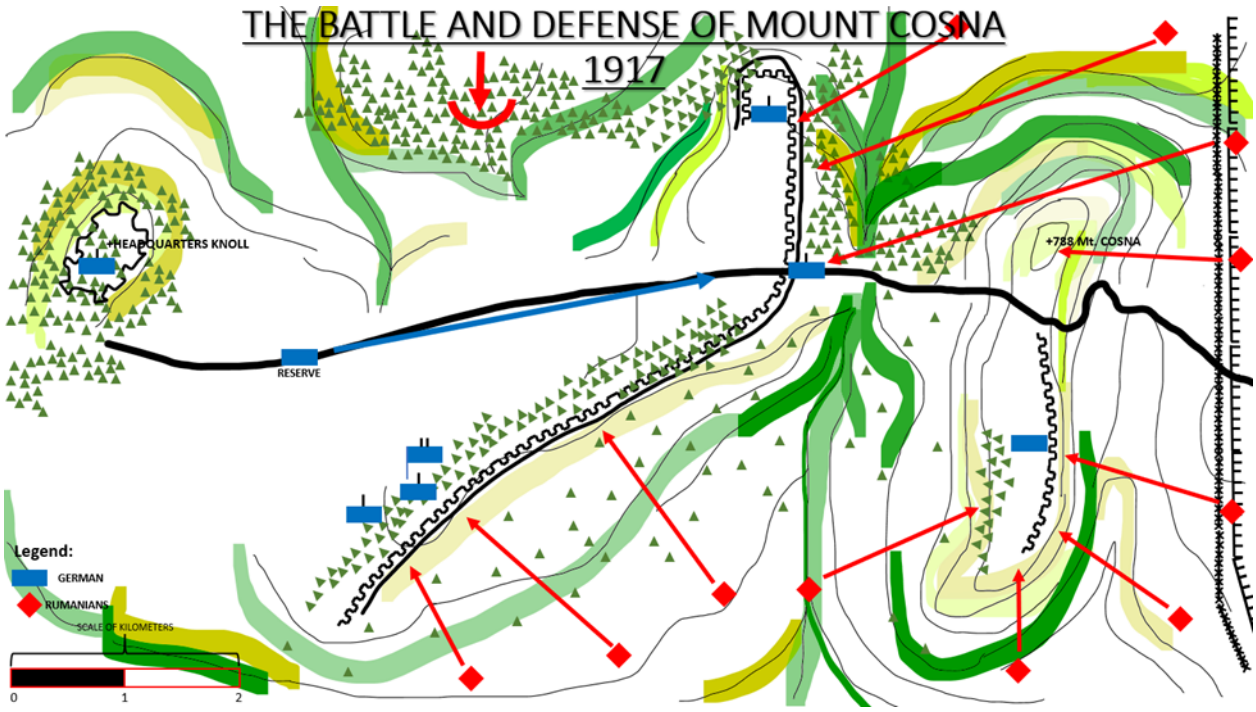

Figure 11. Rommel is Awarded Command of a Combined Arms Detachment as a First Lieutenant

Source: Created by author based on Erwin Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, trans. Gustave E. Kiddé (1944; repr. San Bernardino, CA: Snowball Publishing, 2014), 176,179.

In returning to the Mountain Battalion, and in planning and executing the attack on the Romanian position at Mount Cosna, Rommel showed the first signs of his being mortal. He had suffered his third wounding during the two week battle in a fierce hand-to-hand action.[116] Not only suffering the wounding but he descriptly tells in *Infantry Attacks,* of his utter exhaustion; several times he asked his battalion commander for a reprieve.[117] The battle was not a forgone conclusion. There were attacks and counter-attacks, and the battle was finally decided on 25 August, after the last Romanian attack was repulsed by the Mountain Battalion and they were pulled from the line to the Division rear area.[118] This was not the most exhausting of Rommel's activities, but in reviewing his own statements in *Infantry Attacks* and putting the pace of the level of combat in some of the worst possible terrain in perspective, he shows us a maturation at a high level for his rank and his experience.

At the time of the campaign in Romania, Rommel was a First Lieutenant. He was given command of several companies during this time as the *Rommel Detachment,* to include infantry and machine gun companies by his battalion commander, Major Sprosser. There were a few reasons Rommel was given these commands, including that at the time of his posting to the Mountain Battalion, Rommel was one of the most experienced of the junior officers in the battalion. What is shown in this chapter of his combat career is that he was fully integrated into a command structure that not only

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[116] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 167.

[117] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 129.

[118] Ibid., 167.

recognized Rommel's tactical gifts, indominable will, and forceful personality, but his penchant for accomplishment. This became a focus point of his character in a negative light in North Africa as a misunderstanding by some officers who did not want subordinate leaders to exercise decision making in the realm of mission-type orders. In Major Sprosser, he fully took advantage of Rommel, and his compatriot company commanders in the battalion, and found success in a harsh battlefield environment. It was said that Rommel was the type of subordinate that was uncontrollable and a detriment to operations beyond small unit, but with Sprosser, he harnessed this talent to the battalion's advantage and allowed him to achieve.

Mt. Cosna was a proving ground for Rommel. He was utterly pushed beyond the limits of exhaustion many times, wounded and was not able to lead from the front on every occasion. He recognized, at the very least, that he did have limits and he did have to rely on subordinate officers to carry on the mission at times. He did not show, at any time, a sign of personal defeat. He had the personal fortitude to bear burdens and push to the next day in the worst possible conditions. It also allowed for one of his greatest personal combat accomplishments at Longarone. In the lead up to the final battle of Rommel's WWI experience, the battle before Longarone explains some of his actions and shows a side to Rommel that may have implications on how to understand him in WWII.

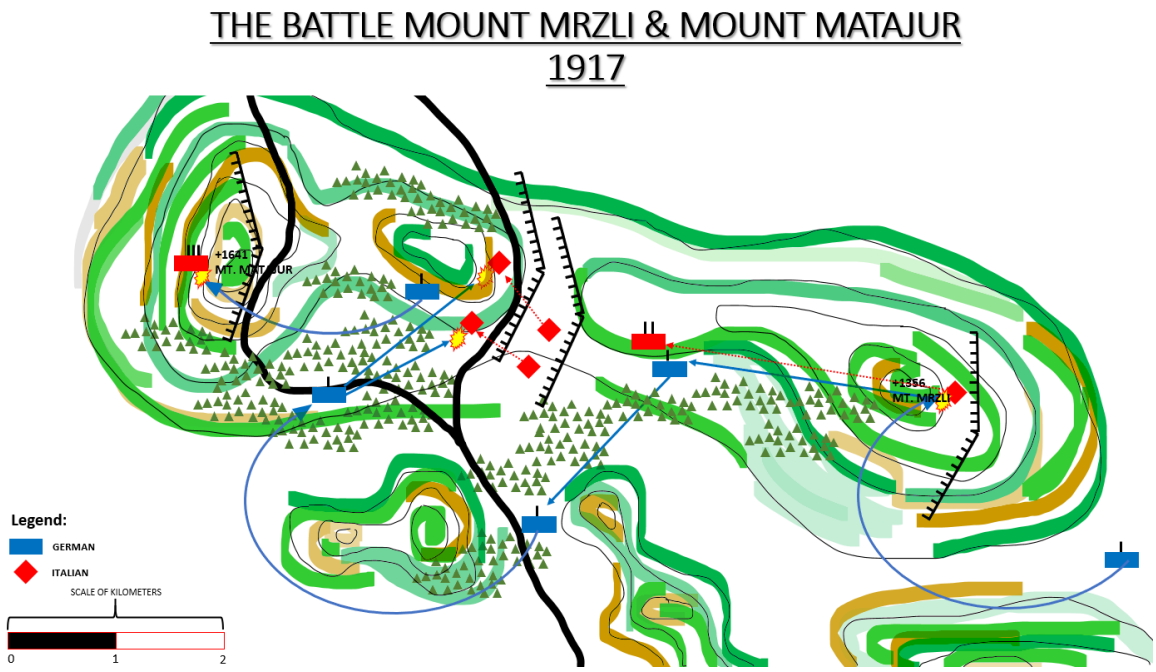

Figure 12. Rommel Practices Auftragstaktik by Disregarding Orders when the Situation Requires

Source: Created by author based on Erwin Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, trans. Gustave E. Kiddé (1944; repr. San Bernardino, CA: Snowball Publishing, 2014), 270,272.

The Tolmein Offensive was part of a larger offensive to avoid what was going on in the Western Front area of protracted trench warfare and to effectively aid the Austrians in quickly removing Italy from the equation to the south. This offensive would begin on 24 October 1916, and was known as the Battle of Caporetto.[119] The overall objective was Venice, but to gain this, the Imperial Army had to gain the high ground areas of Monte

[119] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 66-67.

Matajur and the Kolovrat Ridge.[120] What was seen in the third day of the battle was Rommel growing into the leader that is the object of awe today.

In the advance toward Mount Matajur in the saddle on Mrzli peak, he walked over seven hundred yards down the middle of the Matajur Road with a handkerchief, and accepted the surrender of over 1,500 men and forty-three officers of the 1st Regiment of the Salerno Brigade.[121] Shortly thereafter, Rommel was alerted by the captured officers that the 2nd Regiment of the Salerno Brigade were further up the road and they were of a different mindset than that of the first. Taking that into account, he had just received orders from Major Sprosser to break off and to return to the assembly area at Mount Cragonza. In his rationalization of the orders and considering the position with the recent win over the 1st Regiment, he willfully disregarded those orders and proceeded to the final objective of Mount Matajur. "I debated breaking off the engagement and returning to Mount Cragonza. No! The battalion order was given without knowledge of the situation on the south slopes of the Matajur. Unfinished business remained."[122]

Indeed, Rommel was not a man to give up the attack when he had the offensive advantage, and it meant the capture of the Italian forces and the critical objective of Mount Matajur. However, the credit that should have been attributed to Rommel was conveyed on another. Lieutenant and "brother" officer *Leutnant* Ferdinand Schorner, was given the *Pour le Mérite* because he was recognized by the *Alpenkorps* as the first to

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[120] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 67.

[121] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 220-221.

[122] Ibid., 222-223.

reach the summit of Mount Matajur.[123] After the fight for Matajur and with the Rommel Detachment of three rifle companies and a machine gun company, he was uncharacteristically subjected to failure.[124] This failure was a combination of many elements. One of many was the constant offense that the *Alpenkorps* was trying to maintain in the attacks on mountain positions prior to the Isonzo River attacks. The men, and more importantly, the leadership, was exhausted. Rommel, himself, was wounded numerous times and was debilitated at many points in the campaign. It is worthy of note that Rommel's vanity could also be at play here in perhaps not putting his most confident foot forward in his efforts, coupled with a sense of physical and mental exhaustion after Matajur. The fact that Rommel did most of the work in securing that major objective and was not recognized for it probably played a part in a moment where he was not focused on the next objective. In his after action report, Rommel simply reports that "The night attack of the Rommel detachment on the Klautna Pass failed because the combined fire of the machine-gun company and the advance of the assault companies were not synchronized."[125] However, there was an underlying tone of the utter exhaustion in the reading of that attack. Literally, the words, "exhausted," and "dog-tired," describe the state of the companies that were lugging heavy packs and machine guns to the 4,500 foot heights to then engage in a fruitless attack with hand to hand fighting and grenade

[123] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 72-73.

[124] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 77.

[125] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 233.

battles.[126] Although the overall outcome was a victory in that the Italians soon surrendered their "impregnable" position, and their retreat opened the way to Logarone, Rommel himself was less than the stellar commander that he would become later on in his career.

In an assessment of this difficult time for Rommel, the truth may lie somewhere in the middle. It was true that he harbored an enormous ego that prompted some of his most famous exploits on the battlefield, but that was always coupled with a resolute sense of honor and determination in the execution of Helmut von Moltke's *Auftragstaktik*, of decentralized initiative.[127] A further look will expose that he *was* exhausted and it seems that he was starting to see that in his men as well who, in many respects, were just trying to keep up with him. The impact of this defeat is more telling in what Rommel did not write in *Infantry Attacks*. The account takes up a few pages with the one small paragraph in his "observations" typical ending. This is important to the overall study of him as he matured because it gives the reader a glimpse of him at a low point both, physically and mentally. It also showed a point that he recognized as an area for improvement and allowed Rommel to use this area to motivate his leadership to a higher standard, and this is seen as he continued the attack and then as he pressed the advantage once it was realized that the Italian force opened the road to Longarone.

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[126] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 231-233.

[127] Gunther E. Rothenberg, "Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age,* ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 296.

Longarone

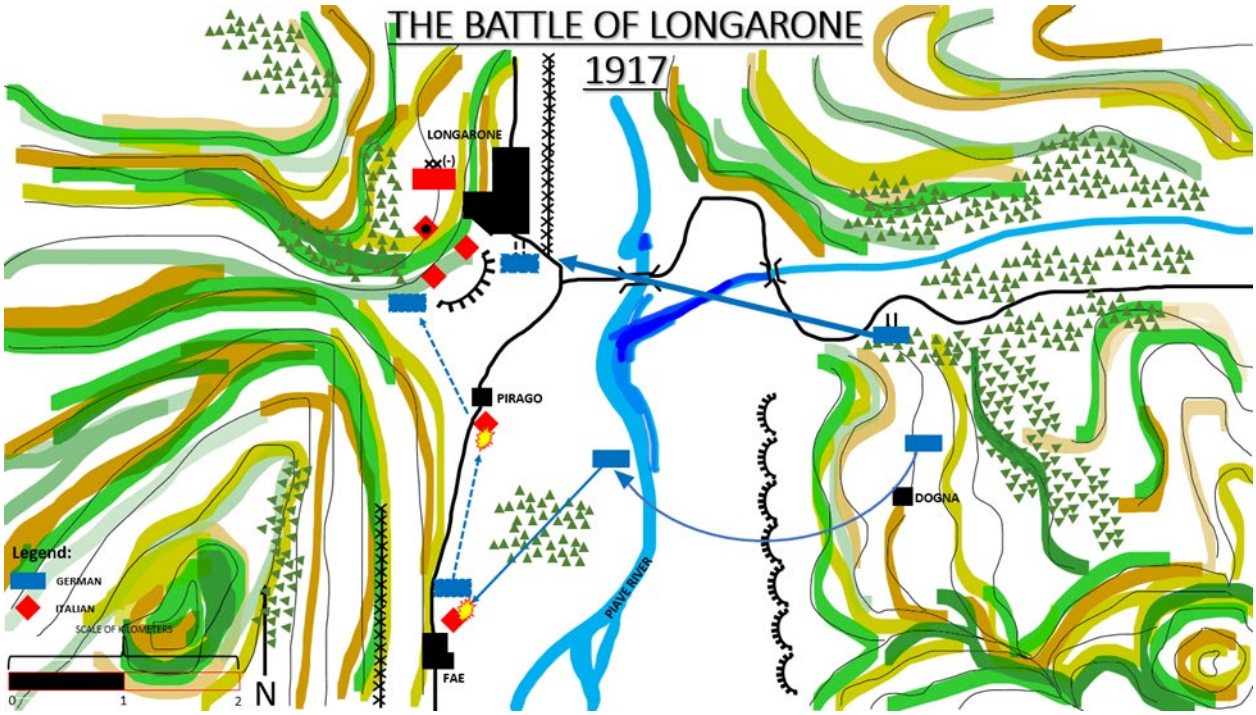

Figure 13. Rommel is Awarded the Pour le Me'rite
for his Victory at Longarone

Source: Created by author based on Erwin Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, trans. Gustave E. Kiddé (1944; repr. San Bernardino, CA: Snowball Publishing, 2014), 301.

In thinking about this German force of the Rommel detachment pushing on through a failed attack, only to have the enemy force retreat and give the ground anyway, it is humorous to picture a hundred or so Germans on bicycles, pedaling to the next engagement. But that is exactly how the next, and most important sequence of the campaign occurred for Rommel. The Rommel detachment rode into Celina and then Cimolais on bicycles, without a shot being fired, to an awaiting town mayor who offered

up room and board for the entire detachment.[128] As surreal as that was, Rommel then looked to the next step of the operation that would take the Wurttemberg Mountain Battalion through the Piave Valley and ultimately to Longarone. In a risky gamble, Rommel was presented with an opportunity to catch the 12th Italian Army Corps in retreat and jammed up in Longarone. The first effort was to coordinate his machine gun company directly across the Piave River and onto targets in the town while his infantry crossed at the town of Dogna, where they could ford on foot.[129] In the first attempt to suppress and then maneuver, the Italians responded more forcefully and concentrated than he expected and even Rommel himself had to retreat, running, so that he would not be captured.[130] In the nick of time, Major Sprosser arrived and positioned the rest of the battalion in order to cover the Rommel detachment's rear and provide support for Rommel to continue to maneuver. This caused the commander of the 12th Corps, sensing that he was to be taken while disorganized in traffic in the town, to pull back. Advancing late into the next day, Rommel was presented with surrender terms from Major Lay, the commander of the Italian garrison at Longarone.[131]

This was a bitter-sweet time for Rommel as he and Major Sprosser were formally recognized by Kaiser Wilhelm in the presentation of the "Blue Max" or the *Pour le Mérite* for taking the total of the 1st Italian Infantry Division but also as the last time he

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[128] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 234.

[129] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 79.

[130] Ibid., 79.

[131] Ibid., 80.

served with the *Wurttembergische Gebirgsbataillon*. In the notification and the presentation of the two medals, there was no formation or fanfare. Rommel recalled, "In the icy cold we held out on the abrupt slopes of the Star Dome under Italian artillery fire . . . mail awaited us and there were two small packages among it. They contained the *Pour le Mérite* for Major Sprosser and me."[132] This was the ultimate vindication of Rommel for his performance at Mount Matajur and was referred to by him as the reason he was awarded the medal. That is, unless he was in Italian company.[133]

Rommel was given leave and then promoted to *Hauptmann*, Captain, and remanded to the headquarters staff of the XLIV Army Corps, Army of the Kingdom of Wurttemberg.[134] He returned to Ulm and reunited with Lucie and impatiently awaited the results of the Treaty of Versailles. In thinking about Rommel in these first experiences in combat as a mature twenty-six-year-old leader of multiple companies that equal a modern Marine battalion, it is essential to understand the very essence of what is to be appreciated. Arrogance, exuberance, energetic and insubordinate can all describe the young man that would continue to have an impact on tactical thought and action. He was, without a doubt, the quintessential warrior. He could be short-sighted and impetuous, callous, and completely egotistic. These traits comprised his character to show who he really was. But what Rommel was at this stage in his life was complicated, utterly German, and a thinking-warrior. He compartmentalized his tactical victories as well as

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[132] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 263-264.

[133] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 81. In Italian company, especially in North Africa, Rommel would boastfully remind his Italian counterparts of Longarone.

[134] Ibid.

his defeats. He personified the USMC Leadership traits and principles and showed that he led men in chaotic battle with aplomb. He was, first and foremost, at the end of his time as a combat leader in World War I, an example of the type of tactical leader that ascribes to USMC Principles and Army Values. Further, it was his imperfection in the mastery of all of the Principles and Values that made him relatable to future generations.

Rommel began a mission of personal growth in the Inter-War Period that shaped him as the ideal soldier to add to the final completion of the Schlieffen Plan in the invasion of France in 1940, completing the *Sichelschnitt*, "The Sickle Cut," in combat as he was a pawn for the next German government to misuse because of his unquestionable integrity and commitment to his brothers in arms.[135]

Inter-War Period and Early World War II

There was almost a lifetime between the Rommel's last combat action in the mountains fighting the Italians and his next combat command. Several significant and historical events occurred that began to shape the next chapter of Rommel's life and role in combat leadership. The most cataclysmic was the eventual capitulation of the Imperial German Army, and the abdication of the Kaiser, to the terms of the Versailles Treaty, in June of 1919. In the forced compulsion of Germany by the Allied powers and under the incomplete League of Nations, the world had unknowingly sown the seeds from which the next near-apocalyptic world war was to spring. In regard to Rommel, he was re-assigned that previous January to the 13th Infantry Regiment of the new German

[135] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 149.

Reichswehr, army, as a company commander.[136] Significantly, he was one of thousands of professional army officers that, after the Treaty of Versailles was signed, was virtually floating from different postings and sometimes performing menial tasks. The officer corps of the new *Reichswehr* was limited to 4,000 commissioned officers.[137] Some of the duties required the putting down of riots and rebellions in the cities and towns all over Germany. Rommel was also tasked with some of this distasteful duty, but unlike some of his contemporaries, he sought non-lethal measures in order to disperse hostile crowds instead of resorting to harsh measures that damaged the reputation of the army.[138]

The taskmaster of the German Army was General Hans von Seeckt, appointed on 11 October 1919, charged to rebuild the German Army under the purview of the new German government, the *Weimar* Republic.[139] With his discerning eye and impeccable organizational skills, von Seekt searched the mass of now unemployed officers and re-introduced the cream of the crop into the new organization as the *Chef der Heeresleitung*, or Chief of the Army Command.[140] Selected officers were signed on for a period of twenty-five years and each man was a volunteer.[141] This suited Rommel fine. As it was, he most likely would not conceive of any other profession outside the Army. So, when

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[136] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 561.

[137] Ibid., 101.

[138] Ibid., 99-102.

[139] Ibid., 93-101.

[140] Ibid., 95.

[141] Ibid., 97.

Captain Rommel's orders came to join the *Reichswehr* Infantry Regiment 13 in Stuttgart, he was more than delighted. He served there as a Captain for the next nine years in different capacities, and learned the art and organization of battalion and regimental command, in the best staff school, with the most experienced men in the world.[142] Something to note is that while he was with the 13th, he was also learning the weapons of war themselves. It was not uncommon for Rommel to be found with his enlisted men doing gun drill or assembly and disassembly of the machine guns in order to understand the totality of what was required for employment.[143] This knowledge would help him, as a commander of larger units, in understanding time and space when in the attack. It would also allow him to keep a mental picture of logistic supply and combat degradation of the weapons that were actually doing the attacking. Sadly, this desire to get in and get your hands dirty is not common with most modern commanders and sometimes leads to under or over estimation of capability and support of the front-line units. For Rommel, his connection with the man doing the work was second-nature and may lend a clue as to why he was able to consistently build cohesion in the men he led in combat and the students that he instructed at the Infantry Training School later in his career.

Between this time at the Infantry Training School and the beginning of World War II, Rommel was promoted and ordered to different posts. His contributions to the training of the *Reichswehr's* officers, and then different units, were very much in the background to the turmoil that the political spectrum was under, including, Adolf Hitler's

[142] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 99-103.

[143] Ibid., 103.

rise to power. Under von Seeckt's direction, for better or worse, the new army was held separate from the state as an independent arm of the new government. Basically, the Army was a power that could have an effect on exactly who or what the government would be, only loyal to Germany itself.[144] The Army was the largest stake-holder in the rise of the next leader for Germany and had to be controlled or complicit in what direction the country was to take in this unstable time.

What Rommel was most likely and blissfully ignorant of was that, under that concept, the de-facto deciding vote was the commander of the German Army in who was acceptable to govern and who was not. This concept led to the initial split between the political and the military in the rise of Adolf Hitler and in the terrible consequences for each faction as he rose in stature and consolidated his power in his quest to become the ultimate dictator. The point of it is that Rommel was a soldier and not political at all.[145] He had no complicity in how Hitler came to power or in Hitler's methods and conduct. At best, at the outset of the return to strength in the 1920s and 1930s, Rommel's efforts to train and educate the next generation of soldiers were related to the strategic aims of the Nazi regime in terms of providing the means to execute a national strategy, but any claims that Rommel was complicit in whatever aims Hitler may or may not have had are suspect.

Nevertheless, Rommel was brought to Hitler's attention and had formal dealings with him as a professional. The first meeting came in 1934, when Rommel was a Major

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[144] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 107.

[145] Ibid., 111-112.

in command of III Battalion, *Jager*.[146] Hitler was in Goslar for a formal inspection of the *Jager* Battalion. The next time that Rommel and Hitler were to meet was after Rommel was promoted into the new *Wehrmact,* replacing the *Reichswehr* in 1935.[147] During the 1936 Nuremberg Rally, Rommel was assigned as part of Hitler's military escort. He was in charge of traffic control for the day and given explicit instructions, from Hitler, to allow no more than six vehicles to be in the official convoy. There was an incident when Rommel, true to his instructions, stepped in front of the seventh vehicle which happened to have some senior officers and Nazi party "big-wigs" in tow. As was expected, he was berated and threatened, but Rommel stood fast, according to orders. Hitler heard of this and personally congratulated Rommel on his execution of his duty.[148] Rommel was promoted to *Oberst*, Colonel, in 1937 and posted as Commandant of the Theresian War Academy, outside Vienna.[149] In Hitler's drive to consume Austria and Czechoslovakia, Hitler again called on Rommel to command his personal escort when arriving at Hradcany Castle in Prague. In 1939, Rommel was promoted to *Generalmajor*, or Brigadier General, and placed in command of the *Fuhrerbeglietbataillon*, Hitler's personal protection of himself and his headquarters.

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[146] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 124.

[147] Ibid., 125.

[148] Ibid., 132-133.

[149] Ibid., 137.

This promotion coincided with the attack on Poland, 1 September 1939, and the beginning of World War II.[150] This was advantageous to Rommel in a couple of ways. First, the continued exposure to Hitler allowed him the opportunity to indirectly be a candidate for further special assignments. The bodyguard and personal protection assignments were always conducted well and sometimes garnered praise directly from Hitler. Secondly, it was an opportunity for Rommel to see the functions of the higher staff, as Rommel had no real academic, strategic, or operational training in his career. This point became the reason why Rommel commanded the way he did and from some of his critics, why he was limited in his understanding of the larger picture of how the war was being fought. So, when he was in command of the *Fuhrerbeglietbataillon,* he was exposed to the operations in action and directly consumed how the higher echelon was conducting the campaign.[151] Moreover, Rommel probably was able to discern the negatives from large staffs and that may be a clue as to why he never operated with a traditional structure and why he was not to command from a rearward position. Lastly, being in the room when operational decisions were being made allowed Rommel to see how to communicate effectively by seeing how the different commanders, from Hitler on down, received and perceived information and how they made decisions. This allowed Rommel to take advantage of the gaps in communications and to provide specific information to certain individuals to support his own plans.

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[150] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 142-145.

[151] Ibid., 146.

At first, this concept may seem shady in the sense that Rommel had and did use different tactics in dealing with the higher levels of command in trying to advance his own agenda. In the context of the contentious levels in the higher-level command structure, this could also be seen as being an adept military politician because of the complex nature of the personalities combined with their own personal agendas. The bottom line is that Rommel was receiving a bountiful education in how to get what he needed from the higher command structure in order to be a more efficient officer. This idea was in direct contrast to those that would castigate Rommel outright for his assignments coming directly from, and for Hitler himself. This is to include his posting as the commander of one of the ten armored divisions in the newly formed *Wehrmacht*. On 12 February, 1940, Rommel was given orders to assume command of the 7th *Panzer* Division ahead of several senior commanders.[152] Whatever the relationship with Hitler, it was exactly what Rommel desired and exactly the commander that the 7th *Panzer* Division needed.[153]

[152] Russel H. S. Stolfi, *A Bias for Action: The German 7th Panzer Division in France and Russia 1940-1941* (Quantico, VA: Command and Staff College Foundation, 1991), 2.

[153] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 151-156.

7th Panzer and the Invasion of France: May 1940

Figure 14. Rommel's 7th *Panzer* Division's Route to the English Channel

Source: Created by author based on David Fraser, *Knights Cross* (London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 1993), 165, 184, 196; Warfare History Network, "The German Invasion of France," n.d., accessed 1 December, 2019, https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/WW-France-Map-1-4CMar04.jpg; Jewish Virtual Library, "Northwestern France, 1940," n.d., accessed 5 January, 2020, https://www.jewish virtuallibrary.org/jsource/images/maps/NorthwesternFrance.jpg; Warlord Games, "Rommel Map," www.warlordgames.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/W-Rommel-MAP-600x478.jpg.

It is difficult to discern the glorious battle history of the 7th *Panzer* Division from the almost overshadowing of its illustrious commander. Indeed, if not for the posting of Erwin Rommel to the 7th Panzer, there may only be a footnote on their performance as a whole during the French Campaign in 1940. However, it seems more likely that it is a case of the perfect storm for Rommel to receive the posting he wanted at the right time in

order to exercise the full potential of his combat leadership abilities as well as to showcase the full capability of what *Blitzkrieg* actually was. To fully appreciate this concept, it is important to note that no one really knew how successful *Blitzkrieg* was going to be. It is taken for granted that when studying the opening battles of the German push into Poland in 1939, and into France in 1940, that the *Wehrmact* was the ultimate fighting organization. They moved with precision and speed, using fleets of tanks to run over opposing armies in record time. In part, this is true but only in the aspect that they did accomplish this. What is mostly forgotten is that there was no precedent for this style of warfare, and the attack on Poland was, at best, a dress rehearsal for later attacks. As late as 1934, Heinz Guderian, a visionary of modern tank employment among other things, was just beginning to get enough attention from the *OKH* and *OKW* in order to form the *Panzer Truppe* Command.[154] His ideas were radical and uncomfortable for the OKH and OKW Staffs to conceptualize apart from an infantry, foot-mobile force akin to the armies of the First World War.[155] As the invasion of Poland was the first step into World War II, this was a first rehearsal for the *panzer* concept, combined with Guderian's modernizations, such as equipping the tanks with radios and command of large armored formations utilizing speed combined with artillery and close air support. By no means was it a foregone conclusion that the *Wehrmact* had figured out all of the intricacies of mechanized, combined arms warfare, much less were masters of this new Revolution in Military Affairs. So, when the new attempt at completing the original Schlieffen Plan was

[154] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 157-158.

[155] Ibid., 158-159.

finally amended into what was to become *Fall Gleb*, better known as the "Sickle Cut," there was a fair amount of uncertainty and definitely a significant amount of risk involved up and down the entire chain of command.[156]

The appointment of Erwin Rommel to the 7th *Panzer* Division was not, however, part of that risk. From the beginning of his arrival and acceptance of the command, he knew what to do. It had been over twenty years since his last combat command, and he was more than ready. His attention to detail and his concern with the entirety of how to prepare this division was unparalleled and it suited him well. Rommel took the time to instill leadership principles and then give clear intent to the state of readiness he would expect from his officers.[157] He accepted no excuse for laziness and even relieved a battalion commander that he viewed as lazy.[158] Rommel knew what was coming and he was setting the tone for the entire division. Being an Infantryman, he immersed himself in the mundane activities of his troops. He participated in the daily maintenance and technical application of the weapons of war. In doing this, he gained trust from his subordinates and respect from the troops. Rommel devised, participated in, and supervised drills in coordinated movement, communication and live-fire exercises.[159] Most relevant of all, he had several converted vehicles constructed in which he could maintain his up-front style of leadership and continue to be in contact with his combat

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[156] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 150.

[157] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 160-161.

[158] Ibid., 161.

[159] Ibid.

elements while engaged – as he believed in being at the point of friction in any battle.[160] The most important development was his construction of his division staff. Rommel built and manned his staff, first and foremost, as a tool to support the subordinate commander. He laid the foundation of his staff on trust. This meant that if the staff was updated on the pace of battle and decisions that had to be made, he allowed for his Operations Officer, who was a Major, to make those decisions. His main divisional staff consisted of *seven* primary staff officers. Three were Majors and four were Captains. These were supplemented by various supporting officers in the Quartermaster Staff as Special Staff. There was not a Chief of Staff or an Executive Officer. In comparison, the standard 1989 Marine Division Staff that is comprised of *thirty* officers. This includes an Assistant Division Commander and a Chief of Staff, along with "innumerable" special staff officers and enlisted Marines.[161] Rommel made it expressly known that the tempo of the operation would not wait on his approval. This set the tone for the staff to be in line with managing the battle in supporting the maneuver elements. This also meant that he was trusting the staff to interpret the flow of battle without being prisoner to the communication of decisions from him while well-forward of the command post.

Rommel's observations while at Higher Headquarters confirmed to him that there was no room for staff intrigue or misunderstanding of tactical matters while in operations and he would circumvent this by reducing his staff, shortening communication from himself and his commanders, and allowing his commanders and staff to maintain

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[160] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 162-163.

[161] Stolfi, *A Bias for Action*, 84-85.

momentum by trusting their judgement according to his intent.[162] With all of this, 7th *Panzer* was hardly destitute in operations without Rommel. Rommel had a definite impact on the culture of the Division but they were well-led at all levels and had developed a "common approach to warfighting which gave them great speed, flexibility and a tremendous talent for communicating much in few words."[163] What this would mean on May 10, 1940, is that they were a part of the greatest and most successful attacks in modern history.

The attack on France was immense in size and scope. There were three Army Groups: A, B and C. Group A, in the center, was to push through the Ardennes under *Panzer* Group Kliest with the main effort, or *schwerpunkt*.[164] Led by *Generaloberst* Heinz Guderian's XIX Corps of the 1st, 2d and 10th *Panzer* Divisions and *Generalleutnant* Hermann Hoth's XV Corps, consisting of the 5th and 7th *Panzer* Divisions, as well as the 32d Infantry Division.[165] Group B, in the north, were to guard the right flank of the main effort, providing the feint that would tie up the bulk of the allied forces in the north after defeating the armies in Holland. Group C, was to engage

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[162] Stolfi, *A Bias for Action*, 162-163.

[163] Ibid., 3.

[164] Ibid., 4. "Literally, the heavy point". This term is used synonymously with the term "Center of Gravity" in modern United States Marine Corps planning at all levels to describe both the enemy and friendly foci of power in the offense and defense. This is also applied to terrain and its interpretation for the offense and defense. The Center of Gravity, or COG, is referenced from Carl von Clausewitz's definition in his book, *On War*.

[165] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 154-155.

the Maginot Line and to provide a feint so that the allied forces there would be occupied and unable to focus on the Ardennes, where the main German attack was.[166]

Rommel got the word that the attack was imminent on the 9th of May.[167] He arranged his division so that the lead element was more of an attack element that utilized the mobility of his motorcycle battalions coupled with his anti-tank and weapons units.[168] This is an example of how he used the unit's capabilities as a flexible entity other than being inhibited by doctrinal parameters and also how his mind was always fixated on the attack. All of his units would have the capability for advancing without being pigeon-holed into roles that provided only one use for a particular subordinate force. Rommel, as did Guderian, also maximized his organic and attached capabilities in combined arms and they were moving at an astonishing speed. The first real obstacle for the entirety of the Group and 7th *Panzer* was to be the Meuse River. That is also where the first real engagement was to occur.

With the speed of action, Rommel was outpacing 5th *Panzer* Division on his left flank. When recognized by the XV Corps Commander, *Generalleutnant* Hermann Hoth, instead of slowing his momentum, he was attached two advanced units from 5th *Panzer*.[169] The real threat was that if the *panzers* were stalled at the Meuse, the Allied forces would have enough time to mount a defense and then engage them, negating the

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[166] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 154-157.

[167] Ibid., 154.

[168] Stolfi, *A Bias for Action*, 5.

[169] Ibid., 6.

German's advantage of speed and surprise. Rommel, however, engaged immediately with his division in order to secure a bridgehead and cross at the town of Dinant on 13 May at 0430.[170] From there, he continued to push his division forward and gather all of his forces that were crossing the bridgehead and personally lead a reinforcement mission due to a misinterpretation of a message between 7th Motorized Rifle Regiment in the vicinity of Onhaye and 7th *Panzer* Division Operations Officer.[171] Rommel was wounded during the fight and had the first of his command vehicles, a converted armored transport, knocked out. The fighting was fierce as the 7th continued to out-pace the 5th and others in the *Panzer* Group. It is worth noting that all of the division in the attack, after crossing the Meuse River, had not stopped to consolidate or to rest. The attack was now on its 4th day of continuous combat and would not see a real halt until the 14th of May. It would attack at first light the next day.

In light of the furious pace of the advancing divisions, the 7th continued to chew up large amounts of territory and continued to maintain the offensive. Some of this was due, in part, because of the ingenious method that Rommel instituted, that kept communication to a minimum while being well in front of his command post. His method of keeping all of the various units directed on the subsequent objectives without losing mass and flexibility and while maintaining fire support from artillery and air units was called, "*Stosslinieder Division,*" also called the "Thrust-line of the Division."[172]

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[170] Stolfi, *A Bias for Action*, 7.

[171] Ibid., 10.

[172] Ibid., 12.

In theory it is simple. The orders of the day for the attack were drawn up each night, or when appropriate, according to the objective and the position of each of the units. A line was drawn from the point of position to the objective on a 1:100,000 or 1:300,000 map in one-kilometer sections. From this line, each unit could call his position to headquarters, adjacent units, commanders, comrades or fire support based on their position on that line. For example, Unit A could call its position as "14" and "left 3", meaning, fourteen kilometers from origination and to the left of the line three kilometers. This afforded the support to understand exact positioning without giving tell-tale names of towns or geographical features on an uncovered net. It also allowed for fire-support to be called without revealing where it would be landing. This method allowed succinct communication and swift action to maintain the momentum and to relay important information that took full advantage of the speed of the Division.[173]

[173] Stolfi, *A Bias for Action*, 12-14, 100-125.

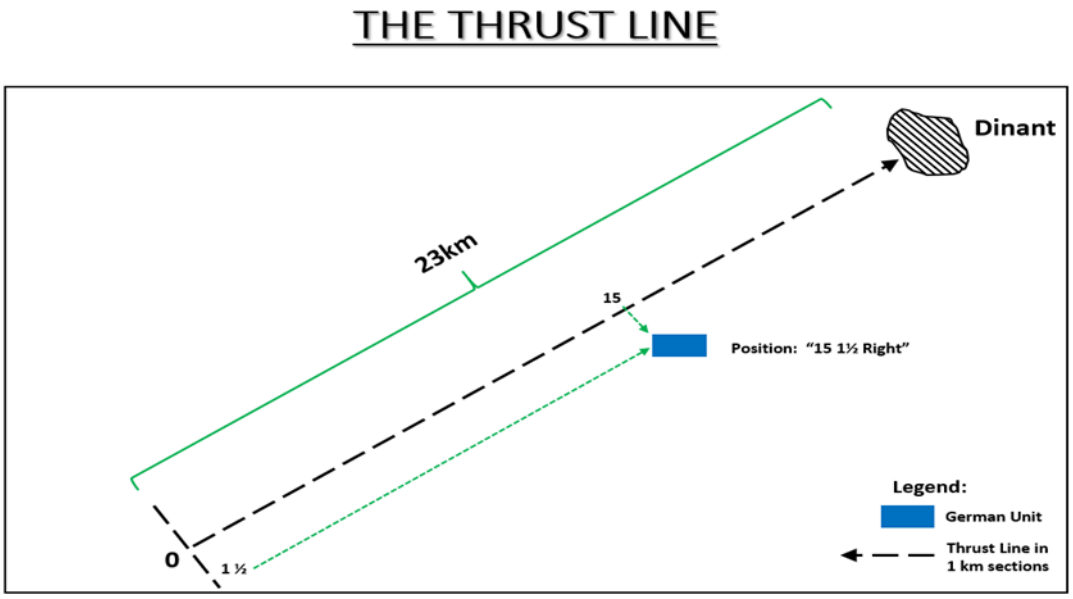

Figure 15. Example of Rommel's "Thrust Line" Method of Navigation and Positioning

Source: Created by author based on Russel H. S. Stolfi, *A Bias for Action: The German 7th Panzer Division in France and Russia 1940-1941* (Quantico, VA: Command and Staff College Foundation, 1991), 100.

Rommel continued the offensive as part of Group A and *Panzer* Group *Kliest* and proceeded with adjacent units, sans the 5th *Panzer* Division, albeit that Hoth had previously attached the 31st *Panzer* Regiment to 7th *Panzer* Division as it was further ahead and in line with 7th *Panzer* upon reaching Dinant, and be sixty miles into the attack from the initial assault position.[174] On 16 May, 7th *Panzer* Division reached the Maginot Line. With some planning and typical Rommel-type tactics of spraying the identified pillboxes with fire as the tanks moved at full speed, the danger was quickly

[174] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 173.

over and the great defenses of France were bypassed for infantry to deal with.[175] This is also where the 7th *Panzer* Regiment began to distance itself from the main body and support of the rifle regiments. Radio communication began to fail, as well, between Rommel and his division headquarters.[176] This was not the first time he lost contact with the headquarters element in his command, nor would it be the last, but when given the choice between keeping the momentum of an attack in order to employ the shock of surprise and waiting, Rommel usually would always choose to attack. Along with the lack in communications and with the continued rapid movement the "legend" of the "*Gespensterdivision*" or Ghost Division was born.[177] It is also worthy of note that Rommel did, in fact, secure the battalion within the 25th *Panzer* Regiment around Le Cateau in order to drive back through his lines to reestablish a connecting file with the main body of his division. The most compelling reason is that during the break-out through the Maginot Line and to Le Cateau, the roads were jammed with, not only civilian refugees fleeing the advancing Germans, but also thousands of demoralized French Army troops.[178] The troops themselves were not just a security hazard but a logistical one. Rommel had to get the French troops under control so that they did not hinder the movement of the division.

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[175] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 176.

[176] Ibid., 177.

[177] Ibid., 191.

[178] Ibid., 178-179.

After consolidating his lines and reconstituting the 25th *Panzer* Regiment, Rommel was to push to Cambrai where he was to be ordered to rest and refit the division for two days. This was 18 May, and 175 miles in the advance. 7th *Panzer* had taken over 10,000 prisoners, destroyed over 100 tanks, thirty armored cars and twenty-seven guns. In comparison, they had lost thirty-five men killed in action, and fifty-nine wounded in action.[179]

On 21 May, the 7th *Panzer* Division was to be part of the greater envelopment of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) that had elements in the town of Arras.[180] As part of the northern flank of Army Group A and the connecting file with the larger envelopment with Army Group B in the north attacking through Holland and Belgium, Hitler was unprepared to hear the news that 7th *Panzer* Division was being engaged by five BEF divisions.[181] But as the tactical situation developed into exposing the BEF's left flank in Belgium, and as Hitler sanctioned the removing of the "halt order" so that Von Bock was to commit two corps towards Ypres, Rommel was ever at the lead element, taking personal charge of the 7th Rifle Regiment.[182] In characteristic style and with the tactics of using his infantry, anti-aircraft artillery in the direct-fire role against tanks and with his *Panzers*, on 27 May he led the attack to secure vital bridgeheads across the La Basse'e canal at Dinant. He followed up his actions with supporting the attack to ensure

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[179] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 181.

[180] Ibid., 182.

[181] Ibid., 183.

[182] Ibid., 189.

that the division was adequately supported logistically, which was uncharacteristic, but also showed that he was learning to be more concerned with the operational outlook of the division, as he did not want a repeat of the lag in supplies as what did occur at Le Cateau.[183]

The point was made for the BEF. Facing a dominating and fast-moving force, the French Army defending surrendered at Lille, and the remainder of the BEF pulled back to eventually go into the defensive to await evacuation at Dunkirk.[184] As for 7th *Panzer*, they would go into the defense around Lille until called upon again to continue the push to the channel. Part of Von Bock's Army Group B, Hoth's Corps, Rommel pushed across the Somme headed due West on 5 June.[185] The organizational leadership of Rommel has evolved. His execution did not lack for speed and urgency, but his control of the entire division was superb. Rommel and the 7th *Panzer* acted in accord with the cohesion of a force that acted with a sense of implicit communication. He managed the flow of information and command so that there were no gaps in understanding how the warfighting functions were to complement each other during the advance. The end state was near, and the 7th *Panzer* operated at maximum efficiency borne of experience and focus through its commander.[186]

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[183] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 190.

[184] Ibid., 191.

[185] Ibid., 194.

[186] Ibid., 195.

This is not to say that the French Army was completely beaten. At Quesnoy, Rommel noted that the tactical control of the French had evolved as well. Elements of the 7th *Panzer*, notably the 25th *Panzer* Regiment, were encountering the use of artillery in the direct-fire mode against the German *panzers*. These were employed with a supporting action of tanks and infantry supporting each other in a series of strong points as the 7th *Panzer* moved West-South-West towards the Seine.[187] This change of tactic for the French, however, did not slow the total advance of Army Group B as Rommel kept his continuity and momentum and moved to the next objective.[188]

To the end of the campaign, Rommel maintained his command personality and his unique ability to write new chapters on the way a division commander was to win at motorized warfare. To this extent, he continued his career, essentially maintaining his strong personality and his ability to motivate others through his force of will and unconventional, if somewhat controversial, methods of getting his objectives met. This includes within the higher strata of the *OKW* and the *OKH*, especially in regard to Hitler himself. Rommel moved onto the command of the highly touted *Afrika Korps* on 6 February 1941. Of course, the name *Afrika Korps,* was not the name upon assumption of his command, but as Rommel started his tenure, the name as well as his own moniker, *Desert Fox*, would be remembered as the principal combat entity fighting at the time, even though OPERATION BARBAROSSA was the main effort of the German Army at

[187] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 195-196.

[188] Ibid., 197.

the time.[189] He was then called upon to command in Italy as the Allies were making their way from Sicily and up the peninsula to the north. After some political battles with higher authorities, he lost his command to *Luftwaffe* General, at the time, Albert Kesselring. Rommel was then posted as the Commander of Army Group B to continue and bolster the defenses on the *Atlantikwall,* or the Atlantic Wall, as part of *Festung Europa,* or Fortress Europe, initially started by Hitler's decree in 1942.[190] This contentious posting came to an inglorious end with the 6 June invasion of France, and finally with the events that transpired from the 20 July 1944, attempted assassination of Hitler and the dubious association in which Rommel was quietly implicated.[191] Rommel was given a choice in the manner of his death and in the end he died by his own hand by ingesting poison on 14 October 1944.

[189] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 186-187.

[190] Ibid., 452.

[191] Ibid., 539.

CHAPTER 5

ROMMEL AND THE APPLICATION OF THE TENETS

Tenet 1: Exceptional Personality

If there is any assertion of Erwin Rommel's character, the lack of a positive attitude in regard to how he conducted his personal and professional life is not one. He reveled in the activities of family and in the preparation and conduct of war. In every instance, from his first experiences in the military he exhibited a positive streak that was infectious and reassuring to everyone around him. This is not to say that Rommel did not have his bad days or could not deliver motivating or sharp-tongued lecture. Overall, in his campaigns and in his writings, he was able to exude positivity and that bred confidence in his troops and in his commanders. Couple this with other behavioral traits such as courage and the "it factor" of indominable personality and there is a commander with the *presence* to impact a faltering effort or to motivate individuals to accomplish the bleak task with extraordinary results. Rommel was a master of this. His unbounded energy in the field and ability to appear via plane, tank or car, he even employed bicycles from time to time, endeared him to his troops. Rommel would show up as an attack was unfolding to personally take command of a battalion or regiment or to race back to the rear of the formation in order to ensure that much needed supplies were being sent forward. He was everywhere, all the time. This alone created some of the euphemisms to describe the characteristically frenetic pace that he was able to maintain in all of his engagements in the First and Second World Wars. That is where we see command presence and actual, physical presence meld into the man simply known today as Rommel.

Sheer presence alone does not endear a commander to his troops and does no good without the demonstrated understanding of the commander of what the troops are enduring on a daily basis while executing orders. Rommel took this as a part of executing command presence in demonstrating courage while not ostentatiously over-doing it for the sake of making a point of doing it. Make no mistake, Rommel loved the camera and would make photojournalistic efforts in capturing all of his movements in 1940 and 1941. The difference is that, when the time came for action, he was all in. The demonstration of courage was not a practiced movement, it was natural. He simply did not recognize any other form of command. He was at the point of friction or at the tip of the spear in battle because he knew that was where he could make the best and most timely decisions. He is often criticized that he did this at the detriment of not understanding his role as a General or even Field Marshall. That is not correct. Rommel knew that the method of a division or Army commander following the advance movements in the attack were cumbersome at best and did not allow for spot-on decisions that would have to be made in order to maintain momentum. It is also not true that he did not have faith in his subordinate commanders in this regard. It is as simple as understanding the type of commander that Rommel was. Rommel was bent on action. He had a deep-seated bias for it. His displays of courage were not calculated to play the hero, but as a commander that deeply believed in using speed to reduce casualties and produce victory. That, as a part of the makeup of his exceptional personality, is why military colleges and professionals are still studying him today.

Tenet 2: Influence the Enemy and Friendly

When discussing how a commander, such as Rommel, has influence over the enemy it is obvious. He simply out thinks, maneuvers and exploits them with superior tactical acumen and force. Using the offensive principles of surprise and speed, he was a pioneer in using armored and mechanized formations to quickly dominate large contested areas that could not match the speed at which he made tactical decisions. Today, that is referenced as the *OOD-A Loop*. A product of Colonel John Boyd, USAF, and adopted by the USMC in explaining the decision-making process while in a combat situation. The OOD-A Loop stands for: Observe, Orient, Decide and Act. Boyd would be famous as "40 Second Boyd" in that he would often challenge other pilots to a dogfight and defeat them in forty seconds using this theory.[192] Rommel, well before Boyd's premise was known, was also a maverick in this regard. The exception was that he was doing it on the ground in an armored tank/mech formation. The prime example of this was the 1940 invasion of France. With the new construct of the *Panzer* Division, a new mechanized ability for attack was borne. Leading the 7th *Panzer* Division as an arm of the *Panzer* Army Group B or *Panzergroup Kliest*, Rommel crossed into France and beyond in one week what the entire four years of World War I could not accomplish. This ultra-aggressive and modernly equipped formation was too much for the French and the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) as they were thinking in terms of foot speed and not mechanized speed. Through this method, and the iron will of Rommel to press the attack with his troops on a level that no army was asked to work at before, France was destined for surrender.

[192] Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 327-344.

Rommel's influential style of leadership and steadfast dedication to the mission were the motivators in 1940 as have been all of his life. His personal tenacity in the face of danger was such that he pulled his troops with him and then he found ways for them to be successful while supplicating himself to danger. He was wounded multiple times in both World War I and World War II while being that imposing leader. It cannot be refuted that the force of his personality and the fact that he would never give up on a mission were the difference in his unit's successes on the many battlefields that he commanded.

Influence in highly dynamic environments is one thing, influence on the home front is another. Rommel's personality and his drive for success also quite clearly extended into how he conducted business behind the lines. His was a reputation for honesty and integrity to all – including Hitler. This was one of the endearing qualities that, at first, Hitler gravitated to, but would be an argument for those implying that Rommel's ultimate downfall was that he spoke truth-to-power to a maniac too many times, and finally exhausted his welcome.

It is true that Rommel would not compromise his integrity for the sake of protocol at the higher echelons in the *Oberkommando des Heers*, *OKH*, or higher command of the army. He did not bow to sycophants of Hitler or to the *Fuhrer* himself in telling the truth as he saw it. It begs the question of how he was able to do this and be successful for so long. Part is that it was his demonstrated ability to win on the battlefield. Some would be the notoriety of being a decorated war veteran sporting the highest decorations for personal bravery, the *Pour le Mérite* and the Knights Cross with diamonds and swords. Most, however, would be the simple fact that Rommel was always Rommel. He could

enter a room and become immediately regarded as the most vetted combat professional present. His attitude towards the aristocracy of the *OKH* was one of disregard. Rommel was not of the blue-blooded Prussian aristocracy, and definitely not a member "of the club." Still, he had earned respect among some of them. Rommel was able to use different contacts within the higher echelons in order to gain personal contact with those that could assist in matters that effected his efforts. In 1941 when the *Afrika Corps* was needing more support in terms of logistical re-supply and more latitude in working with, and under, Italian command, he could get that from Hitler, he worked through officers that had direct access that were not blocked by self-promoting staff officers at the top.[193] Indeed several of these staff officers of the *OKH* that were to keep Rommel in line and to observe and control his actions in regard to the Africa campaign such as Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch and Colonel General Franz Halder went to great lengths to ensure that Rommel be kept in a box. Even so far as to dispatch officers, such as the General Friedrich Paulus, on the *OKH* to Africa to observe and report on him.[194]

Although the efforts were out there to diminish what Rommel was making great strides to accomplish and to impede the necessary logistic and political support just to discredit him, his influence was still a force within each side of any conflict his was participating in. Rommel attacked problems figuratively and with a hands-on approach. When one avenue was closed, he either resorted to brute force or found a way to out flank his opposition. That force of will was to become the part of the legend of Rommel and as

[193] Fraser, *Knight's Cross*, 218.

[194] Ibid., 244-246.

an appropriate example of tenacity that all military organizations strive to inculcate into their leadership.

Tenet 3: Progressive Military Success

Rommel is not a born genius of the battlefield. A trained and experienced military mind can see the progression of hard-won battlefield education that is coupled with *esprit de corps* and unbounded determination to accomplish his duty. Following the progression of Rommel from a young cadet to the Field Marshal that he became, his successes all share the fact that he learned and grew from his experiences. Rommel is regarded as having a sixth sense when it came to combat and his appreciation of terrain and tactical situations is almost uncanny, but this is not an explanation of why he did enjoy the success he did. It all goes to who Rommel was as a soldier and the make-up of his character.

When Rommel is examined, there is no real indicator in his life as to what his motivations are. While still a young man, before he gained entry into 124th Wurttemberg Infantry Regiment, he did have interest in engineering and mathematics. He was also interested in flight and zeppelin craft. But, he gravitated to a higher calling. Rommel wanted to be a part of the larger construct, as his father was, and make his mark using those interests as characteristics of his overall acumen. In fact, those interests would serve him well over the span of a thirty-plus-year career as a German officer.

Throughout the examination of Rommel's life, the start of his career and then in his first experiences in World War I, he was building his repertoire that he would use for the foundation of his further exploits. It is important to note that he was not successful in every endeavor, such as the attack on the Central Position in the Argonne Forest in

1915.[195] In these failures he showed the propensity for self-evaluation and applied these lessons to later campaigns.

There are many other examples of using learned techniques to achieve success as well. Rommel was famous for using suppression in the offense, especially when in the attack with tanks to suppress any resistance coming from block houses on bridgeheads. He learned that from his experiences in World War I. He also learned the value of combined arms in the Battle of Caporetto, or Isonso, and how to utilize maneuver and fire power to overcome prepared positions in contested terrain that was to the advantage of the enemy. These lessons were all translated into the bag of tricks that he could refine to larger operations later on a grander scale.

In examining his success, the biggest failures have come from the perspective of support of the operation. This can be argued as a failure of Rommel or as a failure of the higher command to support the objective as Rommel saw it. There is a wide-ranging argument on this subject when the campaign of the *Afrika Corps* of 1941 -1943, comes to mind. Undoubtedly, Rommel saw the task quite differently than did the *OKH*, and definitely differently than the Italians did in 1941. The argument is really a matter of perspective. Can Rommel be blamed for being given a task of conducting combat operations in Northern Africa and prosecuting that endeavor as he has done every combat endeavor he has participated in? Was it a trap from the *OKH* to discredit a rising star that had the endearing support of Hitler while they were continually denigrated? Or was it simply a failed endeavor to begin with, knowing that Mussolini's government and

[195] Rommel, *Infantry Attacks*, 55-61.

military were never up to the task of conducting a parallel campaign by themselves or with German assistance?

There are a lot of ideas surrounding these questions and in several of the sources for this examination of Rommel, they do conflict and resort to what may be the easy answer of that, perhaps, Rommel was out of his depth in North Africa. That he did not understand the larger strategic picture of what was really going on in regard to the war. That does not answer to who Rommel was and how he had gotten to that stage in his career. It is possible that Rommel did not understand the strategic picture. It is possible that the *OKH* was trying to sideline him in Africa in order to get him out of Hitler's spotlight because he was not one of the anointed ones in the upper echelons of the Prussian tradition. All these and more are possible. On the face of the reality of giving Rommel the command of the *Afrika Korps*, the one thing that was evident was the fact that Rommel's personality and his integrity as to who he was and what he had accomplished had not changed. He had essentially been the uncompromising and un-equivocating commander his whole life. Rommel went to Africa to *win*. Talking defense with the newly arrived Marshal Italo Gariboldi was to Rommel, an anathema.[196] Why would those at the *OKH, OKW*, or even Hitler himself not understand that when you sent Rommel to battle, his aim is to win? In that light, he was primed to fight for the integrity of his command and for the right to win. Otherwise, what was the point?

In sum, Rommel was a product of a dedication to himself, his country and his mandate. His capitalization on success and failure, led to his notoriety and his reputation.

[196] Butler, *Field Marshal*, 190.

A comparison should be made of him as a working-class type hero, of a sort. A comparison that he himself would have relished. A small-town boy from Silesia that worked hard to do his duty for his country.

Tenet 4: Enduring Legacy

One crime that Rommel could not be convicted of is the fact that he has an enduring legacy. In fact, this thesis is one of many of examinations of his life and his accomplishments that allow this legacy to persist. Rommel has been romanticized, criticized, and lauded. He is the quintessential example to military officers all over the world, indeed to USMC infantry officers particularly. It is curious that this is in spite of the fact that he fought for one of the most detested governments that has ever existed in the history of the world. How is that? The answer is simple: Rommel is just, Rommel. His life was spent in the pursuit of winning. He did this through uncompromising expectations of himself, his subordinates, and his leadership. Rommel never tainted himself with the stain of the Nazi proclivity to subjugate and destroy humanity. He was the example of the noble warrior.

This is not to say that he was perfect. He was far from the shining example of a romanticized hero in the sky, surrounded by rays of the sun on fluffy clouds. Rommel made mistakes, and he was subject to all the emotions that the rest of us mere mortals are subject to. His anger at what he perceived as incompetence was legendary. He judged others harshly and was slow to realize potential in comrades and peers. He outrightly dismissed higher commanders if they did not appeal to his sense of honor or duty. He was not above base human desires and had an affair. But in defense of all of this, he was human. What is remarkable about the esteem that both enemy and friendly had for him

was his integrity and in the noble aspirations in which he pursued combat. It was not about the killing, and it was not about the amount of carnage he could inflict on the enemy. It was about the honor and the fulfillment of duty. Rommel was a man that exuded the qualities that all professional military men aspire confidence, competence, humility, courage, energy, focus . . . the list is never ending. Couple this with enormous success on many different fronts spanning over thirty years of service, in two world wars, and you have in Rommel an icon of military achievement. A name associated with aggressiveness and honor that will endure forever.

Tenet Synthesis

In applying the four tenets to Erwin Rommel, this paper was difficult to write. This is simply because Rommel transcended most of the ideals that are attributed to the title of *Commander*. It is not too great a declaration to say that in Rommel, there is one of the best examples of what a military commander should be, if not *the* best. In all of the references, the most evident is that Rommel was all that has been said about him. The most undeniable truth is that, of all the characteristics, he is the most human. His success is not because of some superpower that was bestowed upon him, and definitely not because of the myriad of books that have been published about him. In studying Rommel, the humanity of his life, and the way that he lived it, is what becomes most apparent. That is the crux of what we love about him. He was able to bring a real sense of nobility to the art of military officership. He did this with a firm belief in himself, his men, and his abilities for the sake of the mission. What is seen in Rommel is a man that worked in the worst possible conditions for the best outcomes. He was not a commander that sacrificed men and material for his own glorification but worked to perfect his leadership

techniques in order to prevent needless carnage and still accomplish his mission. In the end, it is said that Rommel was a victim of speaking truth-to-power to one of the worst people that ever walked the earth, Adolf Hitler. However, he was more of a hero to the effect that even when directed to commit suicide he was faithful to himself and his family in the end. Rommel endures because of the man he was. His force of personality, his influence on the enemy and friendly forces, his ability to learn and progress in an unforgiving profession and have success are the blocks of his success. Ultimately, it is the fact the Erwin Rommel maintained his humanity and integrity that he will never be forgotten.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Scipio and Rommel are exceptional as combat leaders because their leadership accomplishments are an enduring example for modern leaders, explained through the four tenets and modern military doctrine. There are a few more questions that need to be answered to explain the thesis of this study. 1) Why are Scipio and Rommel important? 2) What is combat leadership and what do they tell us? 3) Why is it important?

Question 1: The first thing that comes to mind as to why Scipio and Rommel are important is that they both share in what the DoD, USMC and US Army espouse as their defining characteristics of leadership. From this point of view, both Scipio and Rommel share the traits and values that are listed in the USMC and the US Army Leadership Traits, Principles and Values. They also are separated by a few thousand years. That being said, there are distinct differences in the purview of the world that the two leaders looked at their situations. The first being that Scipio viewed only part of the known world. The entirety of the knowledge of the map of the earth centered on Europe, the Middle East and part of what was Africa. His domain was such that, outside of the Roman understanding of the world was non-existent to the extent that he had one real foe, albeit that foe was threatening his country with its very life. To add to that, Scipio, in dealing with Carthage was in total command of every aspect of the Republic, meaning, he was not only the elected Consul on military matters to dictate how he was to prosecute the war on each front but he was also the authority to negotiate the peace. Comparatively, Scipio was restrained from ultimate authority as he did answer to the Senate, but he did

act and determine how the Second Punic War was to be run and the final diplomatic terms on which it would end.

Rommel, on the other hand, was a soldier. His entire career was subservient to commanders in the *OKH* or to Hitler himself. What was different about Rommel's motivations was his loyalty to the German people. He was constantly reminded of that as he moved from battle to battle and counted the cost of war in the names of the fallen in his personal record. When he acted in battle, he made swift and determined decisions and then expected everyone to move at his speed. Rommel would be subverted and cajoled in order to make his enterprise the important to get the best support for him to do his job at the lesser cost of the blood of his men. His struggle ultimately was from the subterfuge of higher commanders and his leader, Adolf Hitler. Scipio, in the end, was smeared politically by the Roman Senate, via Cato, and Rommel was murdered politically, and figuratively, by those in the *OKH* and then Hitler.

Question 2: What is combat leadership and what do they tell us about it? Combat leadership can be explained in different ways by different individuals. Some say it is all about courage. Others say it is about presence at the point of friction. Those who have experienced combat will agree on the differences in individual accounts as the physical and mental effects come rushing back to them in their account of their last action. Some will never agree that it is one thing or another. Therefore, it is an amalgam of the physical and emotional. The difference in degree is the level at which one is to operate in that arena. For example, the machine gunner in the turret will react to an ambush and revert to his direction and training. The officer in the vehicle will have an entirely different set of pressures and expectations associated with his experience. A *combat leader* is totally

different to the former. Going further, a commander of a large group, such as a division or army, had additional pressures and expectations to deal with, to include political, military, economic, and logistic. To qualify as a great combat leader, an individual would have to show mastery of all facets of the title to which he is holding. Scipio and Rommel have this credibility. They show that they are inculcated with all the values, principles, and traits that are aspired to in the modern force and that they have achieved mastery of the four tenets. What the Tenets say about being superbly qualified combat commanders is that selfless pursuit of the noble idea of being a great combat commander is possible and, in fact, the ideal of what every commander should strive to be.

Question 3: Why is this important? To begin with, the study of history is important in that humanity learns something of our past so that it makes better decisions about similar situations. In studying combat history, and specifically, successful combat commanders, it is imperative that there are models in which to emulate. As in all things, leaders select what is the best way to accomplish what is intended to achieve, and leaders do it with guidance and direction. By studying Scipio and Rommel, a commander can aspire and emulate the greater nobility and rightness of their actions so that they can judge their performance as officers accordingly. These commanders provide a roadmap to what is right and a basis for officers to guide their thought and actions in the chaotic environment of combat.

In searching for suitable subjects to study, the magnetism of these two combat leaders is undeniable. There are many others that stand out, but Scipio Africanus and Erwin Rommel exhibit the best in what a modern commander should emulate. Both showed empathy to friendly and enemy alike and were always conscious of the cost of

failure of their decisions. Both learned in battle and survived to hone their craft so that they were masters of warfare. Both men showed immense courage and determination in the most extreme combat situations and were able to push through situations that normal men would have crumbled in. In all, there is only the difference of time and scope that separates them. One wonders if the ideas of honor and chivalry are dead in the modern age. Scipio and Rommel seemed to transcend in the respect that they practiced the art of war, not for the intent of continuing barbarism, but for the attainment of the objective. Scipio was fortunate enough to live out his life to see the fruits of his labor and Rommel was a victim of his loyalty to the idea that his country was led by leaders that shared the same view of honor as he did.

All military professionals can learn from these two great combat commanders. The application of the lessons in leadership and loyalty set the tone of what all professionals aspire to be as United States military officers. In understanding Scipio Africanus and Erwin Rommel and their unique challenges, others will be better in their professional understanding when the call comes to run to the sound of the guns.

APPENDIX A

USMC 11 Leadership Principles

1. Know yourself and seek improvement.
2. Be technically and tactically proficient.
3. Know your Marines and look out for their welfare.
4. Keep your Marines informed.
5. Set the example.
6. Ensure the task is understood, supervised and accomplished.
7. Train your Marines as a team.
8. Make sound and timely decisions.
9. Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates.
10. Employ your command in accordance with its capabilities.
11. Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.

U.S. Army Leadership Principles

1. Know yourself and seek self-improvement.
2. Be technically proficient.
3. Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.
4. Make sound and timely decisions.
5. Set the example.
6. Know your personnel and look out for their well-being.
7. Keep your followers informed.
8. Develop a sense of responsibility in your followers.

9. Ensure each task is understood, supervised and accomplished.

10. Build a team.

11. Employ your team in accordance with its capabilities.

USMC Leadership Traits (JJDIDTIEBUCKLE)

1.	Justice	8.	Enthusiasm
2.	Judgement	9.	Bearing
3.	Dependability	10.	Unselfishness
4.	Initiative	11.	Courage
5.	Decisiveness	12.	Knowledge
6.	Tact	13.	Loyalty
7.	Integrity	14.	Endurance

U.S. Army Values (LDRSHIP)

1. Loyalty

2. Duty

3. Respect

4. Selfless Service

5. Honor

6. Integrity

7. Personal Courage.

APPENDIX B

SCIPIO AFRICANUS CHRONOLOGY

236 BCE	Publius Cornelius Scipio the Younger is born.
218	Accompanies his father on campaign against Hannibal in Northern Italy as a cavalry officer; rescues his father in the battle of the Ticinus River.
217-16	Fights at the battle of Cannae; escapes to Canusium where he rounds up and takes command of four thousand survivors after the defeat.
211	Appointed Imperio Privatus and given command of the Roman armies in Spain.
209	Attacks New Carthage in Spain
208	Defeats Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother at Baccula
206	Defeats Hasdrubal's Army at Ilipa and Spanish insurgency loyal to Carthage at Ebro.
205	Elected Consul and convinces Roman Senate to allow him to attack Africa and Carthage directly.
204	Forces Carthage to recall Hannibal from Italy after landing near Utica. Defeats Hanno at the Tower of Agathocles; defeats Hasdrubal and Carthaginian ally Syphax at the battle of the Great Plains and negotiates a truce with Carthage.
202	Defeats Hannibal at Zama; shows uncanny diplomacy in peace negotiations with Carthage.
201	Returns to Rome with a Triumph; attempts to convince the Senate to accept his terms with Carthage. Elected Princeps Senatus.
194	Elected Consul, for second time.
189	Elected Princeps Senatus for third time; defeats Antiochus at Magnesia.
185	Exile at Liternum.
184	Dies at age 53 at Liternum.

APPENDIX C

ERWIN ROMMEL CHRONOLOGY

Nov 15, 1891	Erwin Johannes Eugen Rommel, Jr is born in Heidenheim, in the Kingdom of Württemberg
Jan 1912	Rommel is commissioned a Second Lieutenant (Leutnant)
Jun 28-Aug 1, 1914	WWI begins with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand
Aug-Sep 1914	Rommel's first combat in the area of Verdun/River Meuse
Sep 1915	Command of first company; II Bn, 124th Infantry Regiment and promoted to First Lieutenant (Oberleutnant)
Nov 10, 1917	Rommel's company captures the town of Longarone
Dec 18, 1917	Awarded the Pour le Me 'rite (known as the "Blue Max" after Maximillian Immelmann)
Jan 11, 1918	Promoted to Captain (Hauptmann)
Nov 11, 1918	Armistice is signed between the Allies and Germany
Jun 28, 1919	Germany signs the Treaty of Versailles (under compulsion)
Apr 1, 1932	Promoted to Major
Oct 1, 1933	Commanding Officer of 3d Bn, 17th Infantry Regiment (Jager)
Sep 30, 1934	Rommel and Hitler meet for the first time during a troop review in Dresden
Sep 1936	Hitler has Rommel assigned to command his personal escort at the Nuremburg Rally (Reichspartietag)
Summer 1937	Rommel's tactical experiences in WWI, Infantry in the Attack (Infanterie Greift) published
Nov 10, 1938	Promotion to Colonel (Oberst)
Aug 23, 1939	Promotion to Major General (Generalmajor) and in command of Hitler's military headquarters (Fuhrerbeglietbrigade)
Sep 1, 1939	WWII begins with the invasion of Poland

15 Feb 1940	Rommel appointed to command the 7th Panzer Division
10 May-10 Jun 1940	The invasion of France is executed Rommel crosses the Meuse River; attacks the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) at Arras; almost killed at the Battle of Lille; and reached the English Channel at Dalles, surrounds the town of Sainte-Valery-en-Caux that is held by the 51st Division (Highland) and they surrender
19 Jun 1940	7th Division captures the port of Cherbourg Rommel's last action in France in 1940
9 Feb 1941	Promoted to Lieutenant General (Generalleutnant) and sent to North Africa with two panzer divisions that will become the Afrika Korps
21 Jun 1942	Tobruk falls to the Afrika Korps; Promoted to Field Marshal (Generalfeldmarschall)
15 Jul 1943	Appointed commander of "Army Group B" in Italy
21 Nov 1943	Army Group B is assigned to reinforce defenses of the "Atlantic Wall"
6 Jun-17 Jul 1944	Operation OVERLORD is executed; Rommel conducts the defense of the Western Front
29 Jun 1944	Rommel confronts Hitler and demands that he make peace with the Allies There are no more conferences
17 Jul 1944	Rommel is badly wounded in a strafing run by Royal Air Force planes
20 Jul 1944	Hitler is wounded in a botched bombing attempt at the "Wolf's Lair" headquarters
7 Oct 1944	Rommel is suspected of being complicit in the assassination attempt of Jul 20th; he is summoned to Berlin but declines
14 Oct 1944	Hitler orders that Rommel commit suicide or his family will suffer reprisal Rommel acquiesces and consumes poison
18 Oct 1944	Rommel is given a publicized state funeral in Ulm and buried in Herrlingen

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