

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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**IN OR OUT OF THE BOX:
A LEADER'S CREATIVE THINKING**

BY

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**In or Out of the Box:
A Leader's Creative Thinking**

by

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ABSTRACT

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Much has been made of the number of missions the U. S. Army has performed since the end of the Cold War. In the forty years prior to 1989, the Army's focus had been on the high intensity, armored warfare that was expected to engulf Europe. Certainly there were diversions in Korea and Vietnam, but the strategic focus was on Europe. All of that shifted as the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union collapsed. For the last ten years the Army has been searching for a firm *raison d'être*: what should we be doing, how should we be organized and how should we be equipped? Because we have begun to leave the Cold War mentality behind, leaders in the Army are beginning to adjust the focus of our organization. The concepts of massed formations and units operating dispersed, but within sight of each other, may no longer be valid. If current operations are any prediction of future operations, the time may have arrived to question how we create leaders.

The Training and Doctrine (TRADOC) officer education system trains officers to use the military decision making process (MDMP) to arrive at acceptable solutions to problems. However, if officers were trained in this methodology either during the end of the Cold War or the recent transition period, those officers tend to be stifled in their thinking because of the way they learned the MDMP system. The MDMP became a rigid thinking process for many of these officers; they frequently did not learn how to approach situations from a different angle than what they had been trained in. This failure to adapt to creative or innovative problem solving techniques present a significant challenge for today's officers who must lead soldiers in situations not traditionally trained for in the TRADOC service school system. Adapting to the new requirements of the Army – embodied in the task of offense, defense, stability and security – will require a change in the education process for new officers as well as a change in the older officers willingness to allow creative solutions to unit missions.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the best way to create the new leaders needed for future operations. The focus will be on lieutenants and captains as the agents for the change. They are new to the Army and have not been prejudiced by experiences in either the Cold War or during the transition period over the last ten years. This paper will address their professional education in the Officer Basic Course and in the Captains' Career Course. It will also assess the environments necessary for those leaders to flourish and the roadblocks they will face as they move forward in their careers.

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IN OR OUT OF THE BOX: A Leader's Creative Thinking

A LIEUTENANT'S EDUCATION

The platoon was performing a mission that in most circumstances would call for a reinforced company at least, and 1st Platoon was operating with about two full squads, including the weapon squad and the antitank section attached to it. The bulk of the platoon's mainline force was composed of its NCOs.

Being understrength, stretched thin and asked to do much with few resources makes 1st Platoon's accomplishments remarkable. They have to use their wits. [A squad leader] had cultivated another set of informers in Bina^oc. He had a list of a half dozen solid leads on people who had weapons, and he wanted to sweep down on them simultaneously in one big raid

. . . They kept digging and sweating until the core of the haystack was burrowed hollow, uncovering a bigger cache. It took two cargo Humvee trips to carry it all back to Company A headquarters.

The raid's total was four AK-47s, three bolt-action rifles, an SKS rifle, a shotgun, a pistol, a grenade, hundreds of rounds of ammunition, uniforms and other military gear, and a pile of luxury items.

The lieutenant, hesitant to abandon the search, remained in the hayloft, pitching out more hay and scratching around the floor. Sweating streams, he finally stopped. He leaned on the gnarled pitchfork in the choking flurry of dust, looked over the work and said, "You know, I studied low-intensity conflict at the Point...but it wasn't this low." It appeared that the 1st Platoon's postgraduate education of the young officer was making headway in filling the gaps.¹

Much has been made of the number of missions the U. S. Army has performed since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. In the forty years prior to 1989, the Army's focus had been on the high intensity, armored warfare that was expected to engulf Europe. Certainly there were diversions in Korea and Vietnam, but the strategic focus was on Europe. All of that shifted as the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union collapsed. For the last ten years the Army has been searching for a firm *raison d'etre*: what should we be doing, how should we be organized and how should we be equipped? Because we have begun to leave the Cold War mentality behind, leaders in the Army are beginning to adjust the focus of our organization. With the above as an example of what leaders are expected to deal with in today's Army, the concepts of massed formations and units operating dispersed, but within sight of each other, may no longer be valid. If current operations are any prediction of future operations, the time may have arrived to question how we create leaders.

In the Cold War days, successful creative or innovative leaders were generally high in rank and position. Platoon and company commanders had little chance to be independent during operations and show their level of skill. This was a product not only of their position in an organization, but also of the

type of warfare the Army trained to during the Cold War. Company grade officers operated as part of the battalion or brigade in the overall context of a mission. Now, lieutenants and captains become town and sector commanders. Though still operating as part of a larger organization, they are faced with more complex and demanding situations that require immediate answers; waiting for a higher commander's order is not always an option. In a crisis situation, these captains and lieutenants may be required to make decisions that have strategic consequences.

The requirement to be creative is certainly not something new. Every leader wants to think of himself as creative. In the past, that role has fallen on the senior leaders. U. S. Grant's instructions to his armies in 1864 represented a creative and innovative solution to defeat the Confederacy. He refused to follow the pattern of operations his predecessors set in failing to synchronize the operations of the Union armies, all in concert, towards a single purpose of defeating the different Confederate armies. Thirty years later, the U. S. Army was essentially a frontier force when Congress declared war on Spain. Brigadier General Henry C. Corbin, the Adjutant General of the Army in 1898, organized the actions of the several military bureaus to make the Army an effective force in Cuba and the Philippines. Faced with the monumental task of harmonizing the effort of the Army's bureau system, he instituted unheard-of weekly coordination meetings and forced the different bureaus to accept or divest their responsibility of supplying and transporting the rapidly expanding Army. Corbin made ideas work not through law, for the military bureau chiefs insisted on the limited legal views of their requirements, but through the persuasive application of logic and sound reasoning. Transforming it into a modern Army was the task for the 1917 Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker. His coordination of the industrial and military power of the United States was unprecedented; getting it to Europe in time to make a difference was extraordinary. The creation of the War Industries Board and the Industrial Preparedness Committee were totally novel and unprecedented, but extremely effective in regulating the production of military materiel. All of these men used creative ideas to solve the problems they were faced with.

The difference in 2000 is where the level of responsibility lies: it has moved much lower into the junior officer ranks. Though not faced with the weighty decisions that Grant, Corbin and Baker faced, many platoon leaders and company commanders of today are facing the issues of peace enforcement, crowd control and ethnic cleansing. They face situations that their battalion and brigade commanders may have never faced. The newest officers in the Army are swiftly becoming the most proficient in the new requirements for the Army. They are the cutting edge of Army reform and they will continue on that edge as they become more senior. Pick up almost any Army branch's professional journal and one can read the articles by these new leaders. These articles explain their dilemma in the face of complex situations. How should the principles of offense, defense, stability and support be applied to the situation being faced? The newest leaders in the Army are forging the answers to these and similar questions on their own.² Admittedly they receive guidance from their commanders, but when push comes to shove, the leader on the spot is the decision-maker. And that decision-maker has to rely on his ability to be

creative and to innovate with his baseline knowledge. That baseline comes from his education in the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) officer education system.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the best way to create the new leaders needed for future operations. The focus will be on lieutenants and captains as the agents for the change. They are new to the Army and have not been prejudiced by experiences in either the Cold War or during the transition period over the last ten years. This paper will address their professional education in the Officer Basic Course and in the Captains' Career Course. It will also assess the environments necessary for those leaders to flourish and the roadblocks they will face as they move forward in their careers.

WHERE ARE WE?

We have recently redesigned the heavy division and are in the process of creating new interim brigade combat teams. The current decisions being made about the future of the Army represent a watershed time for the education process used to create leaders. The officer education system teaches a system to arrive at a conclusion about a particular problem. This decision making process is rooted in a mentality that was focused against the formula-oriented Soviets. Furthermore, this process is taught by those most familiar with it: Captains. This represents the difficulty with change. The current cohort of captain instructors are products of the Cold War education system and are not necessarily prepared to be creative in a classroom setting. They were brought up in the Army's education system in the late 1980's and early 1990's just as the Army was wrestling with the idea of President George Bush's New World Order. Consequently, these officers have had to learn a different thinking process – the consequence of Bosnia and Kosovo – on their own. Their thinking processes were originally rooted in the approach the Army has lived with for many years known as the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP).

The MDMP is outlined in FM 101-5, Command and Control for Commanders and Staff; it leads a reader through all of the steps adequately.³ It describes the method as a five step process. The first step is mission analysis. The manual describes where to look for clear, specified missions as well as how to discern implied tasks. This is a very good start on a requirement to expand from the simple "Do this" to the more complex "If I do this, what else do I need to do?" The second step is the development of acceptable solutions to the tasks divined in the first step. This is perhaps the most creative step. It involves the melding of different methods to produce a course of action (COA) that is acceptable to the situation, feasible given the resources available, suitable to the situation and complies with current doctrine. This is never a very easy step and sometimes arrives at obvious and unimaginative solutions that fit the criteria for a course of action.

Once a leader makes the decision on which course of action he will adopt, fleshing out that course into a plan is the next step. This step frequently has innovative methods for implementing the COA, but more often uses the simple and obvious ways of accomplishing the task. While complex and detailed in its description of the plan, it generally does not use many of the creative processes available to

a leader. The fourth step ensures that all the subordinate leaders understand the plan and what is expected of them. The fifth step is the refinement and supervision of the plan.

While the MDMP is embodied in full in FM 101-5, it is also explained in many lower level manuals. In a sample survey of platoon, company and battalion level manuals, the MDMP is explained in each. Examples of the process are used throughout the manuals in offensive and defensive situations. This gives any reader excellent reference tools for many situations they might encounter, as long as those situations relate to an offensive or defensive mission.⁴

This process is a very deliberate method of organizing one's thoughts along a line necessary to produce a militarily acceptable answer to a situation. It requires an analysis of what must be done, looks at different ways to accomplish it, weighs the different methods against a variable set of criteria and results in the solution that gets the mission done, within the limits of doctrine and the resources available. The MDMP is used through all levels of command because it not only produces an acceptable product, but it also works and works well. It cannot be discounted that it is also very familiar across all levels of command; it is very familiar to the senior officer accepting the product. Because the MDMP is acceptable to the senior officers, very little emphasis is placed on an approach that is more innovative. The MDMP has worked well in the past; there is little desire to change it.⁵

While the emphasis on the MDMP is not bad in and of itself, the strict adherence to its methodology represents the current challenge. With the present instructors formally educated in that process, they are most comfortable with it and little else. If they have been successful using it so far, why should they change? Furthermore, if they have been encouraged in its use by their superiors, little impetus exists for change. Those who did not adhere to the strict methodology may or may not have done well using a different approach to problem solving. Unless they adapted in some other way, those innovators are probably no longer in the Army. Therefore, the instructors now teaching the new leaders, the future battalion and brigade commanders, are the people who have been successful with the old system of military decision making.

The issue is not one of abandoning the old way of business. The requirement to conduct a rigid problem solving process and maintain a strict adherence to it still exists; there are certain times that innovation is neither required nor desired. Rather what is needed is the acceptance of both the formal and the creative process and the commensurate development of the knowledge of when to use each of them.⁶ To change that old system will require a culture change within the Army. While a very worthwhile subject, the change of the Army's culture from the heavy, Cold War focus to the more agile Bosnia-type missions is not in the scope of this paper. Rather the idea that the culture will have to change is accepted and its implications examined. The culture will change; that much is undoubtedly certain. To assist in that change, the education system will have to change. The military decision making process will also have to adapt as part of the education system.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

How will the educational system, and the decision making model, adapt? As with many institutional structures, the change will be slow. Not only will the ideas of teaching creative thinking have to be accepted by the leadership, but the methods of instruction also will have to be formalized, certified and institutionalized before they can be taught by one officer to any other officer. The Army faces a formidable challenge in doing this. It will require a change that comes neither easily nor quickly to the formidable force of the United States Army. With a Chief of Staff as is in place now, that insurmountable challenge may be lessened.⁷

The first area to change should be the people teaching and developing the system. Since they have all grown up in the old system, the officers will have to be taught to approach problem solving a bit differently. In his book on creative problem solving, Scott Isaksen notes that problem solving is a very dynamic process. It involves a push and pull of ideas in order to create something of value: a solution to a problem.⁸ To be dynamic in reaching solutions, the right atmosphere within the organization must exist. This becomes very critical to the process of teaching new leaders how to approach problems. Isaksen identifies many of the blocks to critical thinking, but the focus in the military society is on two: the fear of change and the social pressure of conformity.⁹

The fear of change is certainly natural. If military decision making has progressed this far without any problem, why should it change? The difficulty is accepting and understanding that the Army is transforming. From almost every angle the Army is changing and the fear of that change must be overcome. The Army Chief of Staff, General Eric K. Shinseki, noted in his October, 1999 speech to the Association of the United States Army that:

This commitment to change will require a comprehensive transformation of the Army. To this end, we will begin immediately to turn the entire Army into a full spectrum force which is strategically responsive and dominant at every point on the spectrum of operations. We will jump start this process by investing in today's "off-the-shelf" equipment to stimulate the development of doctrine, organizational design, and leader training even as we begin a search for the new technologies that will deliver the material needed for the objective force. As quickly as we can, we will acquire vehicle prototypes, in order to stand up the first units at Fort Lewis, Washington, where the infrastructure, maneuver space, and gunnery ranges will accommodate such a transformation. It is our intent to have an initial set of prototype vehicles beginning to arrive at Fort Lewis this fiscal year. Other units will follow . . .

I suspect that moving this quickly will be unnerving to some. But, I've spent a little time in Central Texas where they have a great saying: "You can't wring your hands and roll your sleeves up at the same time." We are not into wringing our hands, and we are going to roll our sleeves up and get on with transforming this most respected Army in the world into a strategically responsive force that is dominant across the full spectrum of operations. Doing so will alter the national security environment decisively.¹⁰

That creative subordinates "threaten the status quo . . ." as Rollo May indicated in his book The Courage to Create, is a given.¹¹ This is especially important in the context of General Shinseki's speech.

The types of officers we must seek to advance and champion are the ones who innovate and are creative in problem solving; the ones who challenge the 'we've always done it this way' mentality. They are the kind who will "kick start" things. To champion these kinds of thinkers will keep them in the Army. The company grade leaders – captains and lieutenants – must be the focus for this championing. They are the ones who, from today, will evolve into the leaders of the future and will be the ones who have inculcated the requirements of the 'new' Army. They are the ones who are actively involved in the day-to-day operations of units. As with the opening example, these junior officers are intimately involved in the operations of their organizations. This is the garden of innovation; "... genuine creativity is characterized by an intensity of awareness, a heightened consciousness."¹² Senior field grade officers – lieutenant colonels and colonels – need to give the company grade officers the space for change and for mistakes; they need to establish the creative climate for the junior officers to succeed. The field grade officers need to set their personal and professional fears aside and accept that juniors may have good, if not better, ideas.¹³

From General Shinseki's lead forward, the Army is embracing change. It should also be able to embrace the desire to allow junior leaders to make decisions and to make mistakes. Since many junior leaders, the ones who have been successful in the execution of missions they have not been trained in, operate differently than their superiors, they create a certain amount of anxiety and, though unspoken, fear. The fear of a subordinate surpassing the superior, the fear of something going wrong and the fear of making an avoidable sacrifice slow the superior's desire to allow freedom to a subordinate. Yet the current desire embodied in the senior leader of the Army is to accept that kind of innovation and change. Shinseki has essentially ordered the Army to accept change and get on with it. Though easier said than done, this is a great leap for the Army leadership.

The second obstacle, the desire to fit in, is very important and is especially so in a military organization. The need to be a member of a society is recognized. New lieutenants and captains are very aware of their positions in their organization. They feel the stare of the more experienced members and the questioning looks of approval as they go about their daily tasks. New officers will not seek to take risks or chances if it will separate them from their peers: the other lieutenants and captains. Nor will they willingly try something different if their NCOs question the utility of doing so. Therefore new company grade officers will not be innovative without good cause. As described above, the 'good cause' is usually found in the deployments around the world and in the new missions assigned to the Army. It is imperative that the new officers are trained in the techniques of creative thinking and the MDMP to give them the basis for reasoned decision making.

The company grade officers will fit into the environment and the unit as they gain confidence in their own thinking processes. With encouragement from their peers, their subordinates and their superiors, they will gradually become more accustomed to the environment and will try something different or new. This sort of confidence building eventually results in the acceptance of uncertainty and

change. When this becomes a natural feeling for the junior officers, they are more apt to continue using the innovative and creative problem solving methods they have already found successful.

Assuming that field grade officers will continue to allow experimentation by company grade officers, the Army's education system will benefit tremendously from the influx of leaders who have been on the cutting edge of challenging missions. These new leaders, mostly captains, will be the instructors and role models for new lieutenants. The captains have experienced a new way of performing missions. Before their assignment as instructors, they have been in charge of roadblocks, checkpoints and areas by themselves and have performed successfully. This independence has allowed them to feel successful in their profession. That feeling of success breeds the willingness to continue to experiment and to be comfortable with new situations.

The new sets of captains that return from field organizations to TRADOC's service schools are the right officers to select for the assignment as instructors. Small group instruction has been the norm for many years within the schools and will continue. As assignment officers at U. S. Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM) screen the assignment files, they look for the 'right' captain to send back to the service schools for instructor duties. Similarly, they make rotational assignments from the three Combat Training Centers to the service schools based on the demonstrated capability and potential of the captain at the CTC. Both of these methods get the most successful captains, the innovators, in front of the newest company grade leaders. The officers who proved their ability in places such as Bosnia and Kosovo relate their experiences to the lieutenants.

This sharing of experiences and feelings helps to set the example for the new officers. The lieutenants get to hear the examples of what the instructor was taught in school, what he thought he had to do in his unit and what he really did. This sharing of experiences provides one of the best examples for the new leaders. It allows a greater base for future experimentation upon the lieutenants' arrival in their first unit.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

How are new officers trained in the basic tenants of their profession, yet also taught to think beyond them and be innovative? This balancing act has always been a challenge. New officers must have a thorough understanding of concepts such as the principles of war, offense and defense. The trite phrases of "two up and one back" and "shoot, move and communicate" have their places, but do very little to enhance the idea of innovation. The challenge for many instructors is to be able to balance the concepts required for a base of knowledge and the ideas that rock that base. This requires very careful balance upon the instructors' part. The requirement to teach the fundamentals of operation of any branch is a given. New officers must have the fundamentals inculcated completely before they can move on to other topics. Teaching the fundamentals will be relatively simple. With a base of knowledge established, instructors may gradually move to more advanced situations where the answers to problems are not so

obvious. This will give the new officers the feel to adjust from the fundamental solution to a more creative solution while still accomplishing the given task. Because the instructors are very familiar with the ideas of diverging from basic principles, they are able to critique the new officers on their performance. They will be able to point out why the basics work and how the basics can be worked around to accomplish the assigned mission. Furthermore, they will be able to point out situations when creative or innovative thinking is unnecessary or inappropriate. To learn the balance between rigid and creative problem solving is a fine art that must be worked on continuously.

A difficult challenge for the instructors is to mix the creative problem solving methods without violating the fundamental requirements of military operations. Roger von Oech has written two books that would be invaluable to any instructor in the TRADOC system: A Whack on the Side of the Head and A Kick in the Seat of the Pants. Both books give excellent guidance on creativity. When teaching military operations, any instructor has to balance the 'school solution' with reality and a student's experience. The essence of effective instruction will be "... the second right answer which, although off-beat and unusual, is exactly what you need to solve a problem in an innovative way."¹⁴ The revelations that both Isaksen and von Oech write about are exactly what a creative leader wants to have. Revelations that get away from the routine way of thinking and planning will guide the military leader into new and different solutions to militarily significant problems. Both authors extol the necessity to break with the routine way of thinking and develop the ability to expand the options for thinking.¹⁵

Isaksen proposes using a system that is very similar to the MDMP. He walks the reader through the essential steps of assessing the task (mission analysis), brainstorming through ideas related to the task (COA development) and organizing them into a logical sequence to accomplish the task (COA refinement). Further, the steps include the implementation of the solution and the continued assessment of the solution's success.¹⁶ Von Oech uses more creative terms to suggest essentially the same thing. He recommends changing focus and imaging one's self as an explorer, artist, judge and warrior. The explorer will seek different ideas and methods of solving the task. The artist will take the explorer's ideas and continuously blend them to come up with a solution that may not have been as obvious when initially assessed. The judge will take the ideas, seek the most appropriate solution and give a decision. The warrior will implement the idea and see it to successful conclusion.¹⁷

The necessary conclusion is that the MDMP is not bad, but the rigidity with which the military imbues it with is. Both authors write about exploring the given task (mission) from as many angles as possible. Both authors concede the brainstorming sessions necessary to arrive at an acceptable solution (COA development) are difficult, time consuming and can be aimless unless guided. Though neither author is much concerned with the refinement and execution of the solution, both acknowledge the necessity to keep the solution on track with frequent azimuth checks.¹⁸ Both authors also recognize the necessity of balance between the 'Do this!' problem solving and the creative, but time consuming, method.

If these two authors essentially use the same decision making process as the military uses, what is the difficulty with the military's system of thinking? The difficulty remains in the Army's dedication to enforcing the teaching methods, inculcating the creative spirit across all levels of leadership and accepting the idea that good ideas are not always associated with time in service or rank. General John Abrams, Commanding General of TRADOC, best describes the process the Army faces:

We train to task, condition and standard regardless of the mission. The process is sound. It has been proven over time and across military experience. Given the varying mission sets with which we are presently challenged, we are discovering, through our after-action review system, that our procedures, like our training needs, have to be tailored to fit our mission equipment, available technology and time. In many cases, tasks and conditions have changed, so standards may have to be created or adjusted as well.¹⁹

Abrams indicates the Army is lacking in its ability to train properly and effectively. This is not to say the Army doesn't train well; just that the effort is slightly off course. The course can be corrected not only by adjusting task, conditions and standards to represent reality, but also to ensure sufficient time and practice to allow junior leaders to develop the necessary comfort with uncertainty and ambiguity in their daily missions.

One of the hindrances to this development is the amount of time it takes to train new leaders. The fundamentals must be mastered before the improvisations can start. TRADOC currently limits the Officer Basic Course to less than five months. This does not give enough time to teach the basic principles of any branch and cover many of the permutations possible. Furthermore, this is not enough time to practice many of the principles or situations in field conditions, under stress and in different environments. Though a very important part of this entire thesis, it is beyond the scope of this paper to solve that dilemma.

The system of teaching new officers will eventually change as the current lieutenants and captains successfully move up into instructors' positions at the service schools. Each new cohort of officers will benefit from the innovative and creative solutions being worked now by company commanders throughout the Army. As the cohort moves up through the system, they will advance into positions to become successful company commanders and eventually instructors; the current instructors will become the junior field grade officers. As field grades, they will carry their skepticism forward into positions in units that will require their creativity to solve new and more complex problems. They will have the opportunity to train at the next level of the Army officer's educational hierarchy, the Command and General Staff Officers Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

At CGSOC, the focus is on ensuring a common understanding of the military decision making process. It is admittedly a stilted set of instructions that must be presented to every student to ensure a common baseline. Since every branch of the Army is represented at Fort Leavenworth, this is a logical, though old-fashioned, undertaking. The instruction does not cover different techniques than those traditionally presented in the MDMP. It does not encourage any variation. Each instructor is left to

deviate from the proscribed lesson plans on his own. The only breath of fresh ideas into the classroom comes from the instructor's personal experience or the students' experiences. Being cognizant that the students are generally fresh from field assignments, this is not a very efficient method of capturing good ideas for use by all of the class. Since the presentation of alternative methods of problem solving is haphazard at best, all leaders capture the MDMP as the thinking model of choice. This has the effect of creating a set of rules that the unimaginative follow religiously and the creative abhor. This set of rules will follow the unimaginative officer for the rest of his career. He will hang his hat on the ideas presented in the MDMP and will never seek the opportunity to exploit the innovative advantages this base of knowledge provides him.

After the core courses are taught in CGSOC, there are electives in advanced tactical operations that do go into the innovative and creative methods of mission accomplishment. These courses are mandatory for combat arms and combat support arms officers. These officers are the ones who will be in the decision making positions as units and organizations are deployed to nations around the world. However, since these courses remain electives, not every officer will have the opportunity to train in different techniques other than the standard MDMP. This is not a good sign for the officers who miss the tactical electives. Our Army has proved over and over that no specific unit is placed in harm's way; engagement is an equal opportunity employer. What the CGSOC methodology creates is the feeling of the 'haves' and 'have nots'. The combat and combat support officers have a better grasp on the complexities of the future battlefield than the combat service support officers. This may be a serious flaw in our mid-level educational system. Fortunately, analysis at Fort Leavenworth and at TRADOC Headquarters at Fort Monroe, Virginia shows that the methodology is not on target; CGSOC is changing to adapt.

The challenge for the junior field grades will be to educate the more senior field grade officers – the battalion and brigade commanders – that there are different solutions to the new problems. What worked for those commanders when they were Executive and Operations officers may not work in the current missions being assigned to the military. The battalion and brigade commanders in the near future will be faced with a significant challenge. Much like the challenge faced by a father with his son's 'new math' problems, the mid-echelon commanders will have new situations thrust upon their units and have little mental flexibility to cope with them. The challenge for the mid-echelon commanders is to be able to conduct operations and trust the subordinate commanders to do the right thing when presented with unanticipated situations. The battalion and brigade commanders have grown up in an environment that had a clear focus against an identified enemy. Now, as senior tactical commanders, they face different situations that may not resemble what they were educated in as captains and majors. They are thrust into situations as peacekeepers or peacemakers; situations that require them to operate outside the standard answer of 'two up and one back'.

The solution to this problem lies in education and courses for the commanders. As lieutenant colonels and colonels enter the zone of consideration for command, they are acutely aware of their

potential for selection to command. In informal surveys with new and ex-battalion commanders, they all voiced the fear of being caught mentally unprepared for a deployment.²⁰ That is, they did not want to be sent on a mission without having first thought about how they would deal with different situations. Nearly all spent a great deal of time reading the professional journals of theirs and related branches. Nearly all took advantage of opportunities to visit the Combat Training Centers and ride with observer/controllers. Nearly all surveyed their peers in command about current operations and related challenges. In short, they sought to educate themselves in the requirements of their job.

The self-education approach has its merits, but is significant in its haphazard approach. It is not formalized in the same sense as the lieutenants, captains and majors instruction is. TRADOC conducts a standard course for soon-to-be battalion and brigade commanders. The basic week of the course is for all officers; the advanced tactical weeks are only open to the combat and combat support branch officers. There are also pre-command courses for every branch and each branch determines what is taught in the course.²¹ If there is no requirement to address the challenges of innovative leadership, then it is not addressed. Lieutenant colonels and colonels, command designated officers, are assumed to understand the need for innovation and creativity. They are encouraged to accept the two concepts from their subordinates, but there is no instruction in either the principles of creativity or the encouragement of innovation. This, then, helps to perpetuate the paradox of creating a new Army: the most senior officers who should be encouraging the ideas of creativity and innovation have little or no understanding of the principles involved. They cannot help their subordinate officers if they do not understand how to encourage a creative environment. Also, they cannot be so rigid in their command style as to forbid situations where subordinates can solve problems. The greatest developmental responsibility of any commander must be on the process to prepare his subordinates to take his place; creative problem solving is an excellent method to do this.

In addition to the blocks traditionally imposed in the senior-subordinate relationship, there is another block peculiar to the Armed Forces. Senior leaders have been raised on the mantra of being responsible for America's most valuable asset, its youth. Many times, the idea of an innovative solution is not acceptable because of the potential risks. The potential risks outweigh the potential gains and an innovative solution is discarded. A creative leader is capable of understanding the problem and weighing the loss of life risk against a creative solution to a problem. Sometimes creativity does not provide an acceptable solution. At other times, the risk of losing lives may be acceptable for the problem and its creative solution. There is no easy solution to this situation.

THE PATH AHEAD

The Army is moving in the direction necessary to make changes. With General Shinseki focused on the necessity to "kick start" a new type of organization, the TRADOC schools will follow with different

methods of instruction to teach the use of the new organizations. They will certainly modify programs of instruction and develop new tactics, techniques and procedures to assist officers assigned to the new interim brigade organizations. As those units become more proficient, the results they produce will work for the betterment of the entire Army.

To mentor and champion the junior officers from these organizations will be a critical element of future success. These young officers will develop individually and collectively into a group of leaders who are comfortable with uncertainty and with the concepts of creative problem solving. They could easily emerge as the core group of commanders in 2015. As TRADOC evolves further, many more junior officers will be able to step into complex stability and support missions with comfort and confidence in their skills as creative problem solvers. As long as they continue to see advantages to using the process, they will continue to embrace it and pass it on. The danger to any thinking process is the slavish dedication to using it and no other. With proper instruction and careful support, this danger will not come to pass.

In the overall context of the Army, however, the ideas of innovation and creativity will need more emphasis. Officer basic courses and captains' career courses need to expand to generate more time for instruction in fundamental tactical situations as well as instruction in creative solutions to these situations. The time to teach these skills is absolutely essential to future success in any mission. Though unpalatable in the current fiscal situation, course expansion is more acceptable than a mission failure or the avoidable loss of life. At the majors level, CGSOC must be refocused to incorporate training in situations new field grade officers will find themselves; the course is heading in that direction now. It should teach every student the peculiarities of complex stability or support operations. To make the basis for change complete, both the overall battalion and brigade command course and the branch specific pre-command courses should have instruction on command climate and processes for change. The battalion and brigade commanders need to understand their role in creating subordinates who are comfortable enough to innovate and know when it is appropriate to do so.

The changing culture of the Army will support the growth of junior leaders into the innovative thinkers and leaders, but there will remain a significant block of officers who will not advocate or support this path. If the emphasis placed on change continues throughout General Shinseki's term and into the next Chief of Staff's term, the Army's culture will make a significant turn. The block of officers who cannot embrace the ideas of change must not advance or be in positions to influence junior officers. The junior officers represent the future of the Army in a time of unprecedented change; the senior officers cannot be the roadblocks to future success by insisting on adherence to a thinking method best used in the Cold War.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ "A Lieutenant's Education," ARMY 49 (September 1999): 34.
- ² Examples can be found in Armor, Infantry, Engineer, and Quartermaster Professional Bulletins over the last two years.
- ³ Department of the Army, Staff Officers Manual, FM 101-5 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Department of the Army, May 1997), 5-3 to 5-27.
- ⁴ See, for example, FM 1-112, 2-9-2-11; FM 5-100, 7-2 to 7-9; FM 7-7J, 2-3 to 2-13; FM 17-15, 2-2 to 2-16; FM 17-98, 2-13 to 2-29; FM 71-1, 2-10 to 2-42.
- ⁵ Colonel Robin P. Swan, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, telephone interview by author, 29 February 2000.
- ⁶ Air Vice-Marshal R. A. Mason, "Innovation and the Military Mind," Air University Review 32 (January-February 1986): 43.
- ⁷ Edgar Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992): 313. Though not in the same mid-life crisis that Schein describes, one can argue that the Army is in mid-life after the end of the Cold War and before the Army XXI reaches full maturity.
- ⁸ Scott G Isaksen and Donald J Treffinger, Creative Problem Solving: The Basic Course (Buffalo, NY: Bearly Ltd, c1985), 17.
- ⁹ Isaksen, 29-30; Tina DeSalvo, "Unleash the creativity in your organization", HRMagazine 44 (June 99) 154; Ted Pollock, "Don't let fear hamper creativity," Supervision 60, no. 9, 19.
- ¹⁰ General Eric K. Shinseki, Address to the Eisenhower Luncheon at the 45th Annual meeting of the AUSA, 12 October 1999.
- ¹¹ Rollo May, The Courage to Create (New York, NY: Norton, 1975), 27.
- ¹² May, 44
- ¹³ Eugene Raudsepp, "Establishing a Creative Climate," Training and Development Journal 41 (April 1987): 51. Again, the concepts of creative climates and leadership are outside the bounds of this paper.
- ¹⁴ Roger von Oech, A Whack on the Side of the Head (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1983, 1990), 28. As a student in the School of Advanced Military Studies in 1990, the author sat through a lecture by a retired senior officer who recommended adopting the sub-optimal course of action in order not to be predictable to an enemy.
- ¹⁵ Isaksen, 17; von Oech, 60
- ¹⁶ Isaksen, 17-27.
- ¹⁷ Roger von Oech, A Kick in the Seat of the Pants (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1986), 14-17.

¹⁸ Isaksen, 55,71; von Oech, 79, 103, 112.

¹⁹ General John N. Abrams, "Training and Doctrine Remain the keystones of Readiness," ARMY 49 (October 1999): 72.

²⁰ Personal observations from discussions with 27 LTC and COL command designees during briefings to Armor Pre-Command Courses from 1997 to 1999.

²¹ Dr. Pamela Prewitt prewitt@ftknox5-emh3.army.mil, "PCC POI," electronic mail message to LTC P. C. Jussel paul.jussel@carlisle.army.mil, 3 March 2000.

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