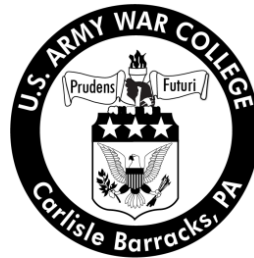


Strategy Research Project

Developing a Climate of Trust

by

Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth J. Mintz
United States Army



United States Army War College
Class of 2013

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth J. Mintz
United States Army

Colonel Michelle Stewart
Peace Keeping and Stability Operations Institute
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

Abstract

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Mission command is the leadership philosophy that will allow the U.S. Army to operate successfully in the future security environment, and remain strategically relevant. The philosophy of mission command is vital to the development of Joint Force 2020, and provides the Army with a leadership framework to enable the current transition from the wars of the last twelve years to a resource constrained environment that increasingly depends on the talent of its leaders. However, mission command is contingent upon a climate of trust to function properly and thrive.

Developing a Climate of Trust

In early 414 BC, Sparta dispatched Gylippus and a small body of Spartan hoplites to Sicily in order to organize resistance amongst their allies, and lift the Athenian siege of Syracuse.¹ The fall of Syracuse would allow Athens to control all of Sicily, and then eventually Italy and Carthage. The resources acquired through such a conquest would give Athens a decisive advantage over Sparta which could lead to eventual Athenian hegemony over the entire Greek world.² The Spartans simply did not have time to assemble a large army to counter the Athenians, and, consequently, entrusted the fate of Sparta and its allies to the judgment and skill of Gylippus and his small band.

Gylippus landed in northern Sicily with his small corps of professional Spartan soldiers, and quickly organized a multi-national force of over two thousand infantry and cavalry from the Sicilian city-states.³ He marched this force over land to Syracuse, and united with the Syracusans to break the siege just as they were about to capitulate to the Athenians.⁴ The presence of a Spartan commander instilled confidence and resolve in their allies, and over the next year Gylippus skillfully engaged the Athenian army, while continuing to bolster his own ranks with additional allied forces.⁵ He also convinced the Syracusans to build and man a naval fleet that exploited training and tactical and technological innovation to eventually defeat the Athenian navy.⁶ Gylippus conducted a brilliant series of joint operations by land and sea with his combined army and navy that eventually subdued and defeated the entire Athenian force in Sicily.⁷

At the time of the Peloponnesian War, Sparta was a world power with an Army renowned as the most professional and fearsome in the world. However, the immense

strain of extended conflict against Athens and its allies led to reduced resources while extending Sparta's commitments across the Greek world. The direct threat from Athens fixed the majority of Sparta's army at home to secure against invasion, maritime raids, or slave revolts. Athens avoided direct conflict with Sparta's armies, and instead conducted an asymmetric campaign that relied upon its superior navy to conduct raids against Sparta's exposed coastline, or achieve a local superiority in arms to conquer Sparta's isolated allies. Sparta was forced to rely upon the competence, professionalism, and skill of its commanders to develop and employ the capacity and unique capabilities of its allies to counter these Athenian stratagems. As exemplified by Gylippus, the Spartans achieved a significant victory against the Athenians by successfully integrating their small, capable force with their Sicilian allies to build and expand upon those alliances. Gylippus' leadership and tactical acumen significantly influenced the confidence of his allies, and the successful execution of joint operations. His leadership and vision provided the decisive impetus behind the development of allied capacity as exemplified by the Syracusan navy.

Gylippus was a superior combined, joint commander who arrived at the right time and at the right place at small expense to his homeland to achieve decisive results by, with, and through the capacity of his allies. The Spartan system produced an officer and an army with the right combination of leadership skills and tactical competencies that when combined with a policy of strategic engagement in the Greek world was capable of critical, disproportionate results. Gylippus was empowered by Sparta to develop the situation, and take the initiative to act decisively in Sicily. This Spartan commander personifies the philosophy of mission command enshrined in U.S. Army

doctrine; he gained the trust and confidence of his subordinates and his allies, and provided a common vision to the unified force on how to achieve success. Within a climate of trust in this unified force, he and his allied commanders developed innovative solutions and accepted prudent risk to “create opportunities rather than simply preventing defeat.”⁸ The example of Gylippus and the defeat of the Athenians in Sicily is a model for the future operations of the U.S. Army.

This historical vignette demonstrates striking parallels between the contemporary world and ancient Greece, and lays the groundwork for the powerful bond between a policy of strategic engagement and the philosophy of mission command. The 21st century American military possesses capabilities that are analogous to the maritime power of Athens with the professional Army of the Spartans, and is in a unique position to project power at the right time and the right place to influence strategic objectives. The question is whether or not the United States Army is capable of developing a leadership corps that is capable of the virtues demonstrated so decisively by the Spartan Gylippus.

Mission Command and a Partnering Culture

Mission command doctrine provides the U.S. Army with a philosophy for operating in an uncertain environment, and recognizes that Army leaders command not only Army forces, but also work with and influence diverse unified partners.⁹ Additionally, this philosophy addresses the strategic imperatives Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta outlined within the context of "Building Partnerships in the 21st Century" guidance that requires the U.S. Army to train, advise, and partner with foreign military and security forces to build their capacity as a means to address security challenges of

the future, and to sustain a peaceful and cooperative international order.¹⁰ Mission command is the vision of the leadership culture of the future Joint Force 2020, and its implementation requires the development of adaptable leaders at every echelon who can function effectively in a dynamic security environment, and in an era of fiscal constraint.¹¹ Within the framework of these future challenges and the transition to Joint Force 2020, the U.S. Army must take concrete measures to eliminate toxic leadership, reform training management, and transform leader development to create a climate of trust that enables mission command and a partnering culture.

Pursuing comprehensive engagement is a critical component of the strategic approach outlined in the latest National Security Strategy. This strategy links America's national security to its allies, and requires active engagement to develop partnerships to address global and regional security priorities. Inherent in this approach is the obligation for the U.S. military to strengthen its capacity to partner with foreign counterparts, train and assist security forces, and pursue military-to-military ties with a broad range of governments.¹² Nested with this approach is the Department of Defense concept of "Building Partnerships in the 21st Century". The purpose of this initiative is to focus and improve upon comprehensive security cooperation to build the capacity of partners and allies, and enable them to collaborate with the United States to meet the security challenges of the future.¹³ This initiative describes a smaller U.S. force similar to the one led by the Spartan Gylippus, conducting innovative, small-footprint rotational deployments throughout the world, and capable of tremendous influence through combined exercises, training, and assistance to allies and partners.

To accomplish this proposal, Secretary Panetta directed geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC) to think and plan strategically for security cooperation.¹⁴

Secretary Panetta identifies critical capabilities that the Department of Defense (DoD) must enhance in order to achieve a partnering culture. Security cooperation capabilities and skill sets were formerly the exclusive responsibility of the special operations community. This initiative now mandates that the entire DoD develop these skills. For example, the Secretary specifically recognizes the requirement for the DoD to develop language training and cultural expertise across the force as a key component of this skill test. Additionally, the Secretary presents the plan to provide forces to support this partnering initiative by aligning U.S. Army brigade combat teams (BCTs) with each of the regional combatant commands.¹⁵ These measures provide the GCC commander with rotational Army forces for consistent employment to shape the strategic security environment, and develop the capacity of allies and partners. Further, such a measure allows Army BCTs to establish regional relationships and environmental understanding that could facilitate future full spectrum combined operations. Finally, the Secretary of Defense identifies the requirement for the DoD to collaborate with the Department of State (DoS), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and non-governmental organizations to help partnered countries modernize and reform to contribute to regional security.¹⁶ This indicates that a key component of this initiative is also a collaborative inter-agency partnership. Creating such a partnership allows for a higher level of mutual understanding and synchronization to establish a whole of government approach to shape the security environment.

The partnering culture envisioned by this policy and nested with the National Security Strategy has wide-ranging implications for the development and education of Army officers who will plan and execute security force assistance operations around the world. This paper addresses these implications, and integrates them into the wider context of a comprehensive proposal to reform training management, commander selection, and leader development. Also inherent in this policy is the concept of decentralized operations conducted within a given GCC by junior leaders and small units to achieve these desired effects. There is a correlation between the level of trust granted to subordinate units by their commanders and the level of influence that a geographically aligned BCT can achieve in support of security force assistance operations. The more distributed their operations, the greater the influence.

General Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), describes an increasingly complex, dynamic, and uncertain operating environment where smaller, lighter forces will conduct decentralized operations at the tactical level with operational/strategic implications.¹⁷ This approach requires uniquely capable Army leaders, Soldiers, and units who can successfully establish credibility and earn the trust and confidence of partners and allies to train, advise, and fight shoulder to shoulder with them. Again, the example of Gylippus during the Peloponnesian Wars elucidates this point. Sparta's allies in Sicily trusted Gylippus implicitly; they derived their trust and confidence in him from his competence as a commander, and the competence of his Spartan soldiers. His ability to achieve decisive results was not possible without internal and external trust; the internal trust that was inherent within the Spartan army itself, and the external trust that existed between Gylippus, his government, and his allies. Like

the example of Gylippus, mission command is the leadership philosophy that will allow the U.S. Army to operate successfully in the future security environment, and achieve a partnering culture. However, mission command is contingent upon a climate of trust to function properly and thrive.

Spectrum of Options

This paper presents a spectrum of options to achieve a climate of trust and a partnering culture that enables the Army's leadership philosophy of mission command. Toxic leadership is a primary obstacle to mission command, and the integration of the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) 360 leadership assessment into the officer evaluation and board process provides a mechanism to identify and prevent this impediment to trust. This paper also proposes training management reform to create a climate of trust that supports the commander's role in mission command and the development of a partnering culture. To this end the commander must assume the central role in training, and develop subordinate leaders that are competent in training management. This will allow commanders to direct training in their units in accordance with their doctrinal roles, and focus on developing training proficiency as a means to create the trust and confidence that form the basis for mission command. Additionally, training must prepare commanders to exercise mission command, and the Army should leverage the full capacity of the combat training centers to develop the skills and attributes inherent to this leadership philosophy.

This paper also presents a series of recommendations to achieve the right balance across the doctrinal leadership development domains to optimize talent and create the trust and competence that are the requisite conditions of mission command

and a partnering culture. The success of mission command is dependent on the talent of its commanders, and commanders play the critical role in the leader development that instills mission command in the Army. Therefore, this paper proposes that the Army focus on a selection process that chooses officers with a talent for command. Commander selection starting at the battalion level is the critical talent management gate, and requires a process with adequate contextual data to evaluate an officer's talent for command. This reinforces the argument to implement the MSAF 360 leadership assessment into the officer evaluation and board process as a means to provide this context. Additionally, the implementation of these assessments into the command selection process creates the basis for a holistic judgment of merit that will inspire trust across the Army. Selecting officers with a talent for command translates into renewed focus on leadership development that will foster talent in junior leaders, and will provide a positive experience to inspire the retention of talented leaders in the Army. This paper will also propose the development of regional skills across the leadership development domains to develop the competence required to operate in support of a regionally aligned theater security cooperation strategy. Integral to this is the development of language skills as part of the commissioning process, and also throughout an officer's career to facilitate the transition between different regionally aligned units. Additionally, the Army should incentivize service with foreign militaries and inter-agency partners. Such service contributes to mission command by developing mutual trust and understanding with allied countries and inter-agency partners; and this would enable commanders to visualize operations, develop intent, and execute operations within the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multi-

national (JIIM) environment on the basis of tangible experience and personal relationships.

Toxic Leadership and Mission Command

One of the primary obstacles to a climate of trust is the frequency of toxic leadership in the Army today. The 2010 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) indicated that 20% of Army leaders are seen negatively by their subordinates, and that 83% of the 22,000 respondents believed that they have interacted with toxic leaders. The survey also indicated that the presence of toxic leaders in the force may create a self-perpetuating cycle with harmful and long-lasting effects on morale, productivity, and retention of quality personnel. 89% of the respondents felt that the issue of toxic leadership is a severe problem in the Army.¹⁸ The toxic behaviors identified in the survey include micromanaging, being mean-spirited/aggressive, displaying rigidity and poor decision making, and having a poor attitude and setting a bad example.¹⁹ In his critical review of U.S. Army generalship following World War II, Thomas Ricks describes the inverse relationship between trust and micromanagement, and explains how a lack of trust has corrosive effects within organizations, “slowing them down and cramping their ability to move information quickly, adjust to new circumstances, or engage in prudent risk taking.”²⁰ The intent of the mission command philosophy is to create the opposite command climate, one in which exercising disciplined initiative and taking prudent risk are foundational doctrinal principles. This command climate emphasizes the importance of the unit and the mission, not the individual leader. Toxic leaders focus on self promotion at the expense of their subordinates, usually without considering long-term ramifications to their

subordinates, their unit, and the Army profession.²¹ The resulting technical report from this recent Center for Army Leadership (CAL) survey identified that erosion of trust was a significant outcome of toxic leadership.²²

As discussed previously, perhaps the most damaging result of toxic leadership is that it produces a self-perpetuating cycle that leads to a culture of toxicity. Research conducted on corporate leadership indicates that toxic leaders emerge because they were mentored by toxic leaders themselves. Poor leaders operate under a faulty definition of leadership and develop toxic subordinates over time.²³ The 2010 CASAL survey clearly supports this observation. The survey indicated that toxic leaders accomplish their goals to a greater extent than constructive leaders, and half of the subordinates of toxic leaders expect that leader to achieve a higher level of responsibility. 18% of the respondents that identified serving with toxic leaders said that they emulate that leader.²⁴ Toxic leaders generally behave in accordance with the goals, tasks, mission and strategies of the organization, and may actually increase subordinate and unit performance through their harsh methods. Promotion decisions are often based on the leader obtaining results, without regard for the negative leadership climate such a leader engenders. Therefore, the toxic leader continues to advance, and is in a position to negatively affect more individuals.²⁵ Toxic leaders focus on short-term mission accomplishment, and provide their superiors with “impressive, articulate presentations and enthusiastic responses to missions...they are unconcerned about, or oblivious to, staff or troop morale, and/or climate.”²⁶

Establishing a climate of mutual trust, where subordinate leaders understand and operate within the commander’s intent requires tremendous leadership and mentoring

effort and the commitment of personal energy on the part of the commander. Not only is this effort and energy a long term investment in the development of subordinate leaders and the organization, but it also creates broad based ownership for the commander's vision and intent. With proper mentorship and the personal investment of the commander to earn their trust, subordinates are capable of expending exponential energy toward mission accomplishment, and ultimately assure short term mission accomplishment at a rate higher than the autocratic alternative. Toxic leaders see this personal investment in their subordinates as wasted effort, and, instead, focus on obtaining immediate task oriented results. When subordinate leaders recognize that simply attaining immediate results, even at the expense of the organization, is an effective pathway to success and promotion, then the system itself encourages a toxic leadership culture. Therefore, toxic leadership is akin to a contagious disease that can spread and subvert a culture of trust in the U.S. Army.

Toxic leadership and its manifestations are anathema to trust within an organization, and directly conflict with the leadership philosophy of mission command, and DoD doctrine. Furthermore, this style of leadership prevents the external trust required to develop a partnering culture with allies and partners, and, therefore, undermines the Defense Department's strategic approach. The intent of the current Chairman is to instill mission command into the joint force through doctrine, education, training, and manpower and personnel processes; to institutionalize and operationalize mission command into all aspects of the joint force, "to be imprinted into the DNA of the profession of arms".²⁷ The Chairman recognizes that a significant cultural change and a comprehensive developmental approach are required to instill the doctrine of mission

command into the force. However, a survey of division commanders in 2004 determined that toxic leadership is rooted in personality and not amenable to change, and that the primary challenge is to identify toxic leaders and ensure that such leaders receive an appropriate evaluation that prevents their advancement. The survey also determined that developmental measures will only adequately affect junior officers.²⁸ Therefore, a developmental approach alone will not affect this cultural change, and toxic leaders will continue to exist and undermine mission command without additional measures.

Personnel Systems Approach

Instilling mission command and a corresponding climate of trust requires a personnel systems approach that clearly identifies and penalizes toxic leaders and incentivizes the alternative. The 2011 Profession of Arms campaign senior leaders survey revealed that only 27% of the respondents thought that the Army is effective at identifying ineffective or negative leaders, and only 17% thought the Army was effective in rehabilitating or removing such leaders.²⁹ In order to instill mission command into the officer corps the U.S. Army must acknowledge the presence and detriment of toxic leadership, and take immediate, concrete action to reform the current personnel system to allow for subordinate input into the evaluation and board system.³⁰

The U.S. Army currently employs a number of programs such as the MSAF 360 program and command climate surveys that provide leaders with a comprehensive leadership assessment from subordinates, peers, and superiors. The Army uses these programs as self-development tools, and the results are confidential. Since the reviews are voluntary and confidential, they “have minimal impact in ridding the Army of toxic

leaders, but...help the good leaders get better.”³¹ It is unlikely that a toxic leader would even use such a program unless compelled to by regulation or a superior.

Therefore, this discussion proposes the integration of subordinate input into the evaluation process using a 360 degree assessment tool. At a minimum, commanders at every level should undergo a 360 degree assessment to coincide with evaluation periods. The evaluation process should require the raters and senior raters of commanders to review the results of these surveys, and comment on the results of this review as part of their narrative in the Officer Evaluation Report (OER). The board process for promotion, command, and senior service college selection should also include a review of these survey results to coincide with the remainder of an officer's file. This would allow the evaluation board to take into account subordinate input from the source, in addition to the comments in the OERs. The inclusion of the surveys in this process provides the board with the ability to honestly and holistically assess the officer. The goal is to establish an accurate and consistent assessment with input from subordinates that focuses beyond what the rated officer accomplishes in the short-term, and recognizes the constructive leadership the rated officer establishes as a long term investment in the Army.³² This personnel systems approach incentivizes mission command, and unmask the toxic leaders who prevent positive change and inhibit a climate of trust. It allows the chain of command and promotion boards to get an honest, transparent perspective of rated officers, and make informed decisions.

Training Reform to Enable Mission Command

The Army must also reform training management to create a climate of trust that supports the commander's role in mission command and enables the development of a

partnering culture. As discussed previously with the example of Gylippus, trust and confidence are derived from competence. As a leadership philosophy and doctrinal precept, mission command demands a very high level of competence from Soldiers, units, and especially commanders. It requires smaller units to conduct decentralized operations with leaders empowered to take action within the commander's intent to develop the situation and rapidly exploit opportunities.³³ The Army's transition to mission command occurs simultaneously with a policy of strategic engagement, which requires smaller units to deploy around the world to advise, train, and partner with armies from other countries in support of contingencies or to help shape the security environment to achieve a strategic effect. Mission command also requires commanders and their units to build teams and earn the trust of unified actions partners which are those military forces, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and elements of the private sector with which Army forces plan, coordinate, synchronize, and integrate during the conduct of operations.³⁴ Doctrinally, this requires every soldier to be prepared to assume responsibility, maintain unity of effort, take prudent action, and act resourcefully within the commander's intent.³⁵ The unifying force providing synergy to these disparate elements is the commander's intent, and the commander is the central figure in mission command.³⁶ Therefore, the entire leadership philosophy of mission command is primarily dependent on the competence of commanders.

Mission command is also dependent on the ability of the Army to empower commanders to develop competence and trust within their units. In mission command the commander must understand the problem, envision the end state, visualize the operational approach, and then develop his intent.³⁷ The commander must have the

knowledge, experience, and skills to develop intent that is properly aligned with the problem, and then clearly translate his intent to his subordinates. All of this requires the commander to have an intimate knowledge of his unit's strengths and weaknesses, and the capabilities of his subordinate leaders. The commander structures the operation and assigns subordinates their missions based on his knowledge of these capabilities.³⁸ This calculus finds its genesis in training, which is a critical component of instilling mission command into the U.S. Army. One of the central tenets of mission command is to build cohesive teams through mutual trust. Army doctrine describes trust as shared confidence among commanders, subordinates, and partners, and that trust derives from successful shared experiences and training.³⁹ Therefore, the commander has a tremendous level of responsibility, and requires a corresponding level of authority in training management to develop the level of competence required for mission command.

This paper proposes that the Army must enable commanders by structuring training management the same way it envisions structuring operations in mission command, and make the commander the central figure in the training management system. General Robert Cone, the current commander of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) supports this argument in his recent article *Building the New Culture of Training*. Over the past ten years, the U.S. Army centralized training and training resources to facilitate the transformation of the Army into modular Brigade Combat Teams, while simultaneously managing deployment cycles in support of the Global War on Terror. Commanders focused on readiness for the missions they faced in Iraq and Afghanistan. In many cases, the Army imposed centralized training

templates on deploying units, which marginalized the commander's traditional role in designing and creating training programs. Commanders lost ownership of their training, and a generation of junior leaders did not learn how to plan, resource, and execute training which resulted in the eventual atrophy of the fundamental skills for training management across the Army.⁴⁰ Consequently, General Cone identifies two imperatives for training the Army as part of Joint Force 2020: return ownership of training to commanders, and hold commanders responsible for leader development.⁴¹ To accomplish this imperative, General Cone asserts that "mission command applies in training just as it does in operations."⁴² In this construct, higher commanders must provide intent, priorities, and resources, and then allow subordinate commanders to craft training within that intent.

Mission command requires commanders to develop trust in their subordinate leaders' ability to train within intent. To achieve this level of trust, commanders must place emphasis on developing junior leader competence in training management. Mandated training events that monopolized available training time, coupled with sustained combat deployments left a generation of leaders without the experiential knowledge and skills required to conduct training management effectively. This directive methodology that focused on short term results also developed a breach of trust between junior and senior leaders in the Army. In order to close this breach, senior commanders must focus on training their staffs and subordinate leaders to plan, resource, and execute good training.

The current cohort of battalion, brigade, and division commanders were raised in a resource-constrained training Army, and have considerable experience with both

combat operations and training management. The Army is once again entering a new period of fiscal austerity, and will require commanders and Army leaders with creativity and a passion to train. This is the right group of officers at the right time to re-build critical training skills and systems through professional development programs, and through the disciplined application of the training management system. Furthermore, when commanders develop subordinate leaders that are proficient at training management, it forges trust that enables mission command to flourish. Within this construct, commanders give their subordinate leaders latitude in determining how to train their units to achieve the desired end state, thereby building trust and initiative in subordinates.⁴³ Therefore, commanders that focus on building proficiency in training management within their units invest in long term leader development and create real capacity for the best training possible within their organization. Ultimately, proficiency in training management results in good training that gives soldiers confidence in their abilities and the abilities of their leaders, forges trust, and allows the unit to adapt readily to new and different missions.⁴⁴

The alignment of training management with mission command allows commanders to set priorities and focus training to achieve a true level of proficiency. Competence is based on proficiency, and competence is the basis of trust and confidence both internally and externally. This is a critical distinction that goes beyond “training to standard” on a specific task or set of tasks. A soldier or unit may train to standard on hundreds of tasks over a period of time, but at some point that knowledge and skill will begin to atrophy and disappear unless specific tasks are retrained. This is how a unit or soldier retains proficiency. Training on so many tasks that soldiers and

units can no longer retain their skills is tantamount to wasted effort. This task saturation stems from excessive mandated training requirements, and indiscipline within the training management system.

Lack of compliance by commanders and senior leaders with the doctrinal roles by echelon in Field Manual (FM) 7-1 is a significant manifestation of this indiscipline. FM 7-1 states that commanders are responsible for training their own unit and one echelon below, and that commanders evaluate units two echelons below. For example, brigade combat team commanders train battalions and evaluate companies; battalion commanders train companies and evaluate platoons.⁴⁵ When higher level commanders intercede in the roles and responsibilities of their subordinate commanders it undermines trust throughout the organization, and prevents those unit commanders from developing the capabilities and skills inherent in mission command.

Furthermore, these subordinate commanders lose the opportunity to build the trust, unit cohesion, and intrinsic understanding of their own unit's strengths and weaknesses that becomes critical in combat through the process of unit training. Commanders that subvert the authority of their subordinates in this way demonstrate a lack of trust, and the aspiration to maintain a level of inappropriate control. Ultimately this is a leadership failure, and may also indicate a toxic style of leadership. Senior commanders should take measures to protect the time of their subordinate leaders while training and mentoring their subordinates through the training management system. Time is the critical resource in training, and allocating adequate time to subordinate echelons to develop the trust and confidence that stems from training proficiency is critical to instilling mission command in the Army.⁴⁶ However, task

saturation denies proficiency and competence, develops distrust, and undermines mission command with obvious negative repercussions on mission accomplishment.

A disciplined adherence to the commander's roles and responsibilities, and the application of the doctrinal process for developing training priorities through the unit's mission-essential task list (METL) described in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 7-0 develops trust, mission command, and proficiency. The unit's METL provides a doctrinal framework for developing focus and priorities. Units focus on developing and maintaining mission-essential task readiness. However, units do not have the time or other resources to train on all tasks that support execution of their METLs across the range of military operations. Instead, the unit's assigned or expected mission drives the focus of its training. Commanders determine the key collective tasks that support the METL and are essential to mission accomplishment, and focus their training plans on developing proficiency on those key tasks. Collective task proficiency results from developing tactical and technical, individual, leader, and lower-level collective skills through instruction, experience, and repetitive practice on those critical tasks.⁴⁷ Picking the right fundamental skills through this process is the responsibility of the commander who has the essential vision, focus, and understanding to create the correct balance to prevent task saturation, and ensure proficiency.⁴⁸

Instilling mission command also requires training leaders and units to function with skill and confidence within the context of the distributed, chaotic, and uncertain nature of the expected operational environment.⁴⁹ Such training must develop the skills of the commander to exercise mission command, and this is a key distinction that General Dempsey describes in his mission command white paper. Training scenarios

must require commanders, supported by their staffs, to receive and clearly articulate intent, and place commanders in situations with a limited window of opportunity. The purpose is to train leaders to recognize opportunity, and develop skills for rapid decision making to take the initiative and exploit those opportunities.⁵⁰ Training for mission command should help commanders develop intuitive judgment by compelling them to make rapid decisions without perfect or complete information, or with too much information. Modern command and control (C²) and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems provide commanders and staffs with more information and data than ever before in the history of warfare. Commanders must learn how to avoid information overload and the “paralysis by analysis” that comes from attempting to apply rigid, time-consuming decision making cycles when a rapid decision is appropriate. Training for mission command focuses on developing commanders that are comfortable with uncertainty and the chaos of battle, and have the moral courage to trust their own judgment to decide quickly and act decisively.⁵¹ The collateral benefit of such training is the trust, confidence, and competence that ultimately allow mission command to flourish.

The U.S. Army Combat Training Centers (CTCs) should develop and execute training for rotational units that reinforces mission command. The CTC is a unique training venue where a Brigade Combat Team can integrate, synchronize, and exercise every warfighting function in a fully resourced, competitive environment. Consequently, a CTC rotation is often the capstone training event in a unit’s training cycle, and BCTs structure their training to attempt to reach collective proficiency on identified critical tasks prior to these rotations. The challenges presented throughout the competitive

scenario at the CTC identify the strengths and weaknesses of the unit and subsequently drive the development of unit training plans following the rotation. These challenges also provide commanders and their units with concrete experiential learning that facilitates the leaders' intuitive decision making skill set that is so critical in mission command. The CTC experience is a critical training opportunity for U.S. Army units, and is a superb training venue to develop and reinforce mission command.

Observations by Brigadier General Charlie Flynn, the Deputy Commanding General – Operations for the 82nd Airborne Division, from a recent BCT rotation to the Joint Readiness Training Center describe a number of recommendations on the future of training at CTCs that are relevant to this discussion. Currently, CTC rotations are two weeks and include command post exercises (CPXs), Situational Training Exercises (STXs), and culminate with a “Force on Force” scenario in which the entire Brigade Combat Team conducts operations in a competitive scenario against the CTC opposition force (OPFOR). These forces present a multi-nodal threat that can include a host-nation insurgency, a network of special purpose forces from a neighboring aggressor nation, a sophisticated, near-peer conventional force, adversarial electronic warfare, enemy air, and cyber attacks. All of these separate threat nodes are networked and can synchronize to present threat effects that as a whole are greater than the sum of the parts. Layered with the CTC OPFOR in the “Force on Force” scenario are multi-nodal, networked civilians on the battlefield that replicate the complexities of the indigenous population. No unit in the U.S. Army can replicate at home station the level of sophistication and free-thinking enemy and civilian attributes that the CTC provides. These forces arrayed within the scenario stress the complete

capacity of the rotational unit across every warfighting function in a way that is only possible in the CTC experience.⁵²

As a result of his observations, Brigadier General Flynn believes that the full two week CTC rotation should focus exclusively on the “Force-on-Force” scenario. He emphasizes that commanders should conduct the CPXs and STXs that are currently apportioned as part of the CTC rotation during their training at home station. This will focus on placing ownership for training back on commanders, and it will stop perpetuating the idea “that you just show up for training to a ‘turn-key event’ and somebody else (TRADOC and Forces Command [FORSCOM]) will get you trained.”⁵³ Institutionally, such a measure nests with the TRADOC Commander’s guidance to return ownership of training to commanders, and reinforces the development of mission command across the Army. The complexity and adversity reflected in the CTC “Force on Force” experience represents a significant opportunity for the U.S. Army to consistently develop and reinforce the principles of mission command.

Brigadier General Flynn also proposes that the CTC experience presents an extraordinary opportunity to integrate inter-agency elements and leaders, and coalition partners with conventional U.S. Army units. Over the past ten years of conflict the Army learned valuable lessons with respect to the integration of diverse forces and skill sets, and it is critical to apply these lessons to the way the Army trains in the future. Brigadier General Flynn describes this integration in the CTC experience as a “unit crucible” offering a demanding physical environment with challenging intellectual problems that creates mutual trust, understanding, and inter-operability. He also stresses that in order to defeat the threats of the future, and prepare for the next fight, Army units and

partners will need multiple training repetitions with this type of synergy at our CTCs.⁵⁴ Additionally, such integration efforts in the U.S. Army's capstone training event would support the Department of Defense initiative to develop a partnering culture. Training with inter-agency partners, and the armies of our allies in the dynamic CTC environment reinforces a whole of government approach and is a significant contribution to building comprehensive security cooperation and the capacity of partners and allies. The CTC experience also allows U.S. Army units to develop mutual understanding and trust with inter-agency and foreign partners, and supports the alignment of Brigade Combat Teams with Geographical Combatant Commands. Exposing our allies and partners to the training methodology at the CTCs also creates another tangible opportunity to increase their capacity. The CTC experience provides a comprehensive venue to train and instill mission command, and develop a partnering culture with inter-agency partners and foreign allies.

Leader Development, Talent Management and Retention in Mission Command

In mission command, the commander inspires trust and confidence with subordinates, superiors, peers, allies, and inter-agency partners. This trust and confidence are the result of the commander's competence and unique leadership talents. The ability to adapt quickly to change, analyze a multi-faceted problem, provide sound intent, and make the right decision at the right time are the result of the sum of the commander's training, education, and experience. Good commanders construct a climate within their unit that engenders trust, collective ownership, and cohesion through the shared challenges of training and command focus on subordinate leader

development. Unlike the corporate world, the Army cannot outsource its commanders. Therefore, military leadership is unique because the armed forces must grow and cultivate their leaders from the lowest to the highest levels.⁵⁵ The success of mission command is dependent on the talent of its commanders to train subordinate leaders. Therefore, the U.S. Army must implement a leadership development strategy that instills mission command and fosters talent.

The Army strives to ensure that its leaders are immersed in a learning environment throughout their careers. The Army Training and Leaders Development Model describes the construct for leadership development in the Army. This doctrinal model portrays three complementary, overlapping domains: operational, institutional, and self development.⁵⁶ The operational domain represents the leader development that occurs within the context of the various jobs and positions a leader serves in along a career path. Operational assignments teach the personal aspects of leadership, provide experiences and immediate feedback that drive self development, and expose leaders to role models and mentors.⁵⁷ The institutional domain represents the training and development activities that are a result of institutional schools and the professional military education system resident within the Army and other military services. The self-development domain describes the training, education, and experiences that occur outside of the military system. This domain could include advanced civil schooling at a college or university in the United States or overseas.

Closely related to leadership development is the concept of talent management. Talent is a special natural ability or capacity for achievement that is the intersection of three dimensions: skills, knowledge, and behaviors. These dimensions create an

optimal level of individual performance, provided that the individual is employed within their talent.⁵⁸ Each person's talent set represents a unique distribution of skills, knowledge, and behaviors, and each organization has a unique distribution of individuals. Achieving optimal organizational performance entails developing, retaining, and employing talent efficiently.⁵⁹ Therefore, optimal performance through a talent management system creates the professional competency and the corresponding trust that are so vital to mission command.

A 2006 RAND Corporation study titled "Leader Development in Army Units: Views from the Field" determined that experiential learning derived from exposure to a variety of assignments and leaders in the operational domain was the most significant contribution to the development of Army leaders.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the results of the study indicated that the Army Captains and Majors surveyed ranked actual experience, role models, and exposure to leaders as the three most significant leadership development activities.⁶¹ Additionally, the study identified that the battalion level commander had the greatest influence on the leader development of junior officers. Battalion commanders had the greatest impact on the quality, quantity, and focus of leader development activities. RAND posits these results are significant, as these unit commanders affect leader development as role models, mentors, and counselors, and the study identified widespread perception among junior officers surveyed that the quality of this personal interaction varied greatly depending on the unit commanders' personalities and their capacities to develop leaders.⁶²

The 2010 CASAL survey that identified the prevalence of toxic leadership also identified significant negative perceptions in the force about the quality and quantity of

leader development. In this survey only 30% of the respondents reported that Army leaders in their unit/organization developed the leadership skills of their subordinates to a large or great extent. Additionally, 43% of Army leaders did not believe that they had sufficient time to carry out the duties and responsibilities for developing their subordinates. Furthermore, only 40% of leaders indicated that their unit's leader development has had an impact on their development.⁶³ The reported statistics indicate a serious contradiction for an institution that must grow its own leaders, and signifies that many senior leaders are not fulfilling their professional obligation within the domain considered the most vital to the development of Army leaders. Lastly, this perception reinforces that there is a significant lack of trust between commanders and subordinate Soldiers and leaders, and calls into question the capacity of senior commanders to abide by the principles of mission command.

As evidenced by the RAND study, the battalion commander is the central individual responsible for organizational leader development. The quality and quantity of that development is directly correlated to the talent of battalion level commanders. The battalion commander is also the first centrally selected commander in the chain of command, and this population of senior leaders forms the pool of officers from which the Army promotes its Colonels and General Officers, and from which subsequent levels of command are selected. Therefore, it is vital to the leadership quality of the Army to select officers with the talent for command in the battalion command board process. This paper proposes that command boards do not have the correct data from which to make a determination of the qualities of officers for mission command in the same way that they do not have the ability to determine the proclivity of an officer for

toxic leadership. The Officer Evaluation Reports (OERs) that form the basis for making a determination for command potential do not provide enough contextual background on officers to make an informed decision on command talent.

The instructions to the command board from the Chief of Staff of the Army provide guidance to the board on attributes, skills, and experiences the board members must take into account when selecting officers. The board instructions provide the detailed, contextual perspective that the Chief of Staff wants the board to use when determining officers for command. For example, the Chief of Staff may request that the board take into account the ability of an officer to develop adaptive, competent, and broadly skilled leaders for the next generation, inspire trust and confidence in their subordinates, or demonstrate empathy and compassion.⁶⁴ The Chief of Staff provides detailed guidance that could identify officers with the talent for command, but the officers' files do not provide the level of detail that could inform the evaluation of these skill sets. To address this deficiency in the selection process, this paper reinforces the proposal to include the MSAF 360 degree leadership assessment into the board process. Not only is this an assessment tool for identifying toxic leadership, but it is also a contextual means that could make a board more reactive and directly accountable to the Chief of Staff's board instructions for identifying officers with the talent for command. A comprehensive perspective of an officer's relationship to his subordinates, peers, and superiors throughout a career provides that officer with an invaluable tool for iterative self awareness and self improvement. Additionally, a wide sampling of data from annual MSAF 360 assessments provides a command board with an additional wealth of appropriate data from which to make a much more informed

appraisal of an officer's talent for command. A record of assessments conducted annually throughout an officer's career allows the board to evaluate an officer's leadership trends, and identify outliers and inconsistencies as well. Selecting officers with the talent for command assures a leadership culture that is uniquely capable of instilling mission command in subsequent generations of leaders. Optimal commanders are much more likely to focus on a leader development strategy that will produce an optimal cohort of talented Army leaders. Therefore, developing talented junior leaders is largely a function of talented commanders.

Selecting officers with the talent for command also facilitates the retention of talented leaders in the Army. This paper proposes that retaining talented leaders in the Army is a product of their exposure to and experiences with a positive leadership climate, and a competent commander role model. As evidenced by the RAND survey, the battalion commander has the greatest impact on junior and mid-grade leaders within the organizational leadership development domain. Imprinting a positive example of leadership and providing junior leaders with a corresponding developmental experience provides the foundation for inspiring talent leaders to continue to serve in the Army; the opposite will deflect talent, and undermine mission command. Furthermore, the Army should decentralize retention incentives such as graduate school, assignment preference, and broadening opportunities, and give commanders direct access to employ those incentives to retain the most talented leaders.⁶⁵ Empowering commanders with these incentives reinforces mission command. By selecting officers with a talent for command, the Army promotes the retention of the most talented leaders that is so critical to an institution that must grow its own leaders. Therefore, the decisive

point for an Army talent management system to instill a climate of trust and reinforce mission command is the command selection process.

Focusing on a process that selects officers with a talent for command also allows the Army to create a merit-based system that generates a climate of trust. Integrating the MSAF 360 assessment into the board process for promotion and command cultivates a climate of trust by selecting officers on the basis of a contextual analysis of merit. The current system focuses purely on a top down perspective, which is not necessarily an accurate portrayal of an officer's leadership ability. A talent management system that takes into account an officer's relationship with subordinates and peers in addition to that of the rater and senior rater provides a much more accurate, holistic perspective of merit. Additionally, this holistic approach provides the potential to prevent the inherent favoritism that derives from a purely top down evaluation outlook. Ultimately, applying a MSAF 360 degree assessment as a tool to inform the selection of the very best officers for command instills integrity into the Army's talent management system, and creates a culture that allows mission command to thrive and prosper.

Leadership in the Modern JIIM Environment

To improve the ability to prevent, shape, and win, the Army plans to align forces regionally in support of combatant command requirements. This conception nests with the strategic guidance from the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Strategy, and will require soldiers and leaders assigned to regional missions to understand languages, culture, geography, and the militaries of the countries where they are likely to be employed.⁶⁶ Within the context of mission command, this will

require competent commanders and leaders with regional based skills that are not currently established within the leadership development domains.

This paper proposes that the Army establish a comprehensive training and education continuum to develop the competence required to operate in support of a regionally aligned theater security cooperation strategy. The integral requirement for establishing a partnering culture within the leadership development domain is foreign language proficiency. The Army must make a prescribed level of language proficiency a pre-commissioning requirement, and strive to assign officers on the basis of their language skills to the appropriate regionally aligned units. Furthermore, the Army should incentivize this skill set by funding culturally broadening opportunities for cadets designed to enhance their language and cultural skills. This could include a cadet exchange program with foreign militaries during summer training, or a semester of study abroad. These measures will preclude additional language training upon commissioning, and infuse leaders into the force who can make an immediate positive increment to the capability of regionally aligned units. Additionally, the language skill set should become a component of the talent management system, and provide an additional talent dimension for future assignment consideration or broadening opportunities.

As a component of the institutional leadership development domain, the Army should establish a language and cultural training system to coincide with officer transitions between regionally aligned units, or in conjunction with assignments abroad. As officers transition to a unit aligned with a different region, they will require additional language training as well. This will require a multi-faceted language training capability

within the institutional training base to meet this demand. For example, every installation with regionally aligned units should create a language and cultural center with an instructor base to train Soldiers and leaders assigned to that installation. The Army could also establish a regionally aligned web-based language and cultural training system to maintain language proficiency, augment the installation training base, or serve as a standalone system. Furthermore, as an incentive to retain talented officers, the Army could provide advanced language training through the Defense Language Institute, or through a civilian institution. Advanced language training is also critical to support the increased emphasis on theater security cooperation, and the enhancement of potential opportunities for service with foreign armies. The Army could also leverage foreign officers attending Department of Defense schools, foreign area officers (FAOs), or U.S. officers with experience as exchange officers to help educate cohorts of regionally aligned units. In order to achieve a partnering culture, and develop the competency required for effective theater security cooperation, the Army must establish a comprehensive leader development program focused on language and cultural skills.

Within the organizational leadership development domain, the Army should incentivize service with foreign militaries and inter-agency partners. Such service contributes to mission command by developing mutual trust and understanding with allied countries and inter-agency partners; which enables commanders to visualize operations, develop intent, and execute operations within the JIIM environment on the basis of tangible experience and personal relationships. Nested with the concept of creating a partnering culture to shape the future security environment, the Army should expand opportunities for talented officers to attend military schools in allied countries, or

serve as exchange officers embedded within foreign allied armies. From a talent management perspective, officers who have experience serving with a foreign army should serve subsequently with a corresponding regionally aligned unit. Expanding JIIM service would provide the officer corps with critical insight into the capabilities of foreign armies and inter-agency partners, and greatly facilitate the ability of regionally aligned units to prevent and shape through engagement, capacity building, and other advice and assist functions. Equipped with the enhanced regional knowledge and focus from embedded service, the Army will also enable the joint force to win when necessary.⁶⁷

In addition to the current emphasis on theater security cooperation, rapid population growth and increased urbanization over the next fifteen years will provide impetus for the regional skills sets that enable population centric operations. The population of the world is expected to grow from 7.1 billion people today to close to 8.3 billion people by 2030.⁶⁸ This growth in population will cause a corresponding increase in urbanization, with 60% of the world's population expected to reside in urbanized areas over the next 15 years.⁶⁹ The rise in population and urbanization will require Unified Land Operations in a population-centric context. Future conflicts are much more likely to be fought “among the people” than “around the people.”⁷⁰ The recognition of this eventuality led to the development of the concept of human domain by The Army Special Operations Capabilities Integration Center, which describes human domain as the totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that success of any military operation or campaign depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to fight and win population

centric conflicts.⁷¹ The Army must develop these unique capabilities across the leadership development domains to generate regionally competent officers that are capable of both theater security cooperation requirements, and future requirement for operations in the human domain.

Therefore, the increased emphasis on theater security cooperation and the proliferation of operations in the human domain underscores the importance of inter-agency and multi-national service as a component of leader development. This service will provide officers with the understanding that General Dempsey identifies as one of the key attributes for mission command. Understanding equips commanders at all levels with the insight and foresight required to make effective decisions, identify and manage associated risks, and to consider second and subsequent order effects.⁷² Understanding within the context of inter-agency and multi-national service informs the creation of commander's intent in Unified Land Operations.⁷³ Gaps in understanding exist where an officer lacks training, experience, or education. The Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganization Act of 1986 addressed the gap in joint service within the Department of Defense, and created a cultural shift within the military by incentivizing joint service. Service immersed with other governmental agencies or with allied armies is the most effective way to provide officers with the concrete experience that will not only translate into understanding and intent, but also create mutual trust. General Dempsey describes trust as the moral sinew that binds the distributed joint force together, and states that "building trust with subordinates and partners may be the most important action a commander will perform."⁷⁴ Therefore, the Army should take the

initiative to make inter-agency and multi-national service a priority, particularly for those officers who have a talent for command.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper proposes a series of recommendations to create a climate of trust in the U.S. Army to enable mission command and a partnering culture. To establish such a climate, the Army must employ measures to identify and remove obstacles to trust, and create the conditions for developing uniquely competent units and leaders. The philosophy of mission command is vital to the development of Joint Force 2020, and provides the Army with a leadership framework that is relevant to the current transition from the wars of the last twelve years to a resource constrained environment that increasingly depends on the talent of its leaders. The Army must also instill mission command into its leadership culture to remain strategically pertinent. Attaining the objectives of the nation's security strategy demands the Army invest in leaders and units that can integrate with and develop the capacity of allies and partners around the world to resolve strategic challenges and create opportunities. This is the legacy and example of Gylippus the Spartan, who despite a dearth of his own forces and wealth, was able to arrive upon the shores of Sicily and inspire and lead his allies to achieve a strategic victory.

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