Leadership: Proceedings of a Symposium Held at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, April 2014

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Online

The Sandhurst Occasional Papers series is available online at: http://www.army.mod.uk/training_education/24565.aspx

SANDHURST OCCASIONAL PAPER NO 18

Series Editor: Sean McKnight (Director of Studies, RMAS)

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An Historical Overview of Leadership

by Dr Stephen Walsh

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The Nature of Leadership

In the course of history, all societies and armies have been interested in leadership. However, leadership remains an elusive and often puzzling phenomenon. This, in itself, is not surprising: leadership is an intangible matter, involving humans, not machines and there is no infallible formula that guarantees success as a leader. Equally, after decades of research there seems to be no leadership style for all seasons, situations and people, either in the military or civilian world. Leadership is easily discussed, but difficult to pin down.

The research literature on leadership reveals, to put it mildly, a wide variety of theories. There are lists of desirable qualities:¹ the list is nearly endless and it is virtually impossible to name a leader who has or has had all these traits. There are books to read, courses to attend, all in pursuit of the Holy Grail: a universal theory that explains the nature and conduct of leadership. The main ideas and theories that have framed the historical debate about this thing called leadership are examined here.
The ‘Great Man’ & Trait Theories of Leadership

Thomas Carlyle’s ‘great man’ theories of the 19th Century were ‘based on the belief that leaders are exceptional people, born with innate qualities, destined to lead.’ In short, it was the destiny of Cromwell, Marlborough, Wellington etc to lead. It was simply a matter of who they were. It was a short step from the great man concept to the trait theory of leadership.

The Trait School

Trait theory dominated the study of leadership from the late Victorian era until the middle of the twentieth century. It argued that some individuals, because of their personal traits, are born leaders. The trait approach was “the first systematic attempt to study leadership.” It studied leaders, not followers, as it was assumed subordinates lacked the traits of leaders. Therefore, it is clear that trait theory is an elitist concept of leadership. In effect, “there is no hope for the rest of us not born with certain gifts or talents for leadership.”

The trait school has several strengths. It appeals to the idea that leaders are people who dominate and lead the way. It gives people faith, if not evidence, that leaders are special people capable of great things. However, it struggles to indicate which personality traits are more important than others and the traits selected are prone to subjectivity. Finally, the trait school does not satisfactorily address the situational context in which leadership is exercised. It does not appear to accept the widely shared understanding that although a leader may be effective in one situation he or she may not be in another.
The Skills Approach

The skills approach, like trait theory, emphasises the leader, but argues leadership is not an inherent aspect of personality, but a set of skills. Learning to become a leader is something that is open to all; leadership skills can be instilled, developed and refined through practice, courses etc. This understanding represented a challenge, to the ideas associated with Trait Theory, that leaders are born and not made. The skills approach was developed in the 1950s. Theorists of the skills approach cited WW1 and WW2 as evidence that millions, not a special few, could lead perfectly well if trained in the right skills. In short, leaders could be made, and therefore, in theory, leadership was available to the majority and not just to an elite minority.

However, it is also the case that due to natural abilities, or traits, some people can develop with practice these leadership skills better than others. The skills might be identifiable, but without natural talent how can leaders lead well, not just competently? In addition, it might be argued the skills approach is not really leadership but management, an attempt by an ‘industry’ to make a lucrative process out an art, leadership; which may not be simply a set of skills and procedures. Of course, as with defining leadership, the distinction between management and leadership is itself a complex and perhaps impossible task. Ironically, perhaps the key attribute of the skills approach is its ability to develop the leadership potential of those with the ‘right’ qualities or traits, enabling them to make the most of their natural ability. In summary, far from being antagonistic approaches to leadership, the trait school and the skills approach are in fact complementary.
The Style Approach

The aim of the style approach to leadership is to discover how leaders actually behave.\(^\text{12}\) It concentrates on what leaders do when leading\(^\text{13}\), not on who they are, what position they hold, what skills they have or on what results they achieve. The style approach focuses on the leadership process: how do leaders behave when leading.\(^\text{14}\) Research established that leaders generally fall into two categories: task behaviour and relationship orientated behaviour.\(^\text{15}\)

Some leaders were almost entirely task driven, compelled to achieve goals with subordinates regarded, consciously or not, as assets to be deployed. Other, relationship orientated leaders, focused on morale, in the belief that good morale was the key to achieving objectives. Finally, leaders capable of both task and relationship behaviour were particularly effective, but also rare.\(^\text{16}\) The style approach was not complicated, nor was it prescriptive, but it shone a light on the nature of leadership and the process of how leaders get the job done.

The Situational Approach: Intellect & Initiative

The situational approach\(^\text{17}\) to leadership argues that different situations require different types of leadership.\(^\text{18}\) In short, no single style of leadership can cope with all the potential situations that require leadership. The basic idea that different situations require different leadership styles is a powerful one.\(^\text{19}\) However, it is a very demanding theory of leadership which requires substantial intellect, mental agility, judgement, versatility\(^\text{20}\) and emotional intelligence. The essence of situational leadership is the ability to assess the true nature of the
situation and match it with a suitable form of leadership. The leader must identify and accept the situation as it is, not how it should be or they want it to be. Armies have been involved in situational leadership, tactical, operational and strategic for centuries, intuitive, considered and reflective. After all, the British Army’s current decision making tool, The Seven Questions, exemplifies this.

1. What is the situation and how does it affect me?

2. What have I been told to do & why?

3. What effects do I need to achieve and what direction must I give in order to develop a plan?

4. Where can I best accomplish each action/effect?

5. What resources do I need to accomplish each action/effect?

6. When and where do the actions take place in relation to each other?

7. What control measures do I need to impose?

The increasing complexity of modern operations suggests that the intellectual ability to understand the situation in relation to the commander’s intent, formulate a plan, and carry it out, has never been more important. However, throughout history different armies have addressed the question of situational leadership in different ways.

During the inter-war years the Russian Red Army believed the operational level was decisive. Operational art required commanders to synchronise all tactical units into one coherent operational whole: hence the Red Army’s use of the metaphors of conductor, orchestra and chess.
In terms of situational leadership in 1924, the Red Army’s Chief of Staff, Marshal Tukhachevskiy argued that:

‘any suggestion of the exercise of independent command by junior commanders is unacceptable. Not knowing the general situation, junior commanders are always liable to take decisions incompatible with it and this may engender a catastrophe. It may cause a boldly conceived and executed operation, requiring precise co-operation between its component parts, to start coming apart at the seams.’22

German officers frequently claimed that Russian tactical commanders carried out the plan regardless of the battlefield situation but they also testified that Russian operational commanders were highly creative and full of initiative.23 The disparity in creativity between tactical and operational commanders reflected the Red Army’s belief that tactical success was fleeting, while operational success was decisive.

The Red Army constantly urged tactical commanders to display initiative but the Russian word initisiava does not mean the same as the western word initiative. Russian initisiava was about the rapid, efficient execution of your tactical mission. It was simply one piece in an overall jigsaw; there was no place for unscripted, individual tactical initiative. To the Russians constant tactical improvisation in response to situations was bad planning, indicative of a lack of foresight. To them improvisation was crisis management, to be used in extremis but only if the situation had changed radically.

To the Germans improvisation was an acknowledgement of the chaotic nature of war. The Germans expected tactical creativity in face of a tricky situation in order to adapt and overcome: the Russians expected foresight to foresee and avoid. In practice, the polarised nature of these
positions was significantly amended by the realities of war, but the Germans and Russians did have a different philosophical approach to the question of where, when, how, by whom and why initiative was to be exercised.

The German notion of *auftragstaktik* emphasised situational awareness and dynamic leadership. It was a key principle of German command & leadership in the period 1806-1945 and was given its clearest expression by General Hans von Seeckt, Head of the Reichswehr (1919-1926). Seeckt considered it essential, not optional, for leaders to make quick decisions, based on instinct and the nature of the situation. Officers were to be ‘independent thinkers’, yet also ‘need to understand when to act independently and when to wait for orders.’ It is widely assumed that the British Army’s ideal of mission command – delegated authority, is an evolution of *aufstragtasktik*: clearly they are related, but many German officers understood *aufstragtasktik* as independent command, namely that an officer had the right, even the duty to make independent decisions.

In effect, many German commanders believed their independent command was not bound by the commander’s intent. In August 1914, General von Francois’ corps, part of the 8th German Army under von Prittwitz in East Prussia, nearly comprised the entire German war plan in the east. At the battle of Gumbinnen, on 20th August 1914, Francois rashly engaged the 1st Russian Army. In response to Prittwitz’s urgent orders to break contact Francois, more or less told him he would break off in his own good time after he had dealt with situation.

Indeed, many German officers seem to have considered *aufstragtasktik* only in relation to the single dominant characteristic of the
Prussian/German way of war, namely the destruction of the enemy forces in the field. It was assumed this was any German commander’s intent. In short, you fought the enemy wherever you found them and that’s why aufstragaktik existed to enable field commanders to interpret the situation, find the enemy and destroy him. If the management did not understand, in a sense it was your duty to ignore them.

Independent thinkers, full of initiative, who think for themselves, who display intellectual agility, people who are good at situational leadership, these are often contrary characters. In the period 1866-1945, German officers spent nearly as much time at war with each other as they did with everybody else. They were incessantly subverting the chain of command, ‘interpreting’ their commander’s intent, more or less how it suited them according to their own assessment of the situation. However, in 1940 these dynamic, bold thinkers, these calculated risk takers, wiped the floor with the Allies.

As the Germans crossed the Meuse on 12th May 1940, many French officers brought up in a system of centralised command, struggled to respond to the unfolding situation. They were more obedient but less dynamic, more predictable but less intellectually agile. It is interesting to note that the Israelis who have emphasised situational awareness, initiative, risk-taking, quick decisions also have a notorious history of fractious relations between commanders, one that has, at times threatened to subvert the entire chain of command. Well, perhaps one has to take the rough with the smooth. If predictions about the Future Character of Conflict are true, such as there will be hybrid multi-dimensional wars among the people in complex urban environments, the British Army will need such leaders.
Contingency Theory

However, some argue the degree of intellectual agility, understanding and versatility required by situational leadership, especially in war, is unrealistic. Contingency theory\textsuperscript{31} argues it is easier to change your leader in response to the situation.\textsuperscript{32} At first sight this seems heresy: it conjures up images of a chaotic chain of command with no clear direction. In fact, it is closely related to the idea of niche-expertise with commanders using their situational judgement to call on experts while retaining overall responsibility. Indeed, far from being heretical, some argue contingency theory is just common sense, a realistic acknowledgement that individual leaders cannot be equally effective in all situations.\textsuperscript{33}

Path-Goal

Path goal theory,\textsuperscript{34} systematically examined the relationship between leaders and followers. It investigated how leaders motivate subordinates in pursuit of objectives.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, by making subordinates/followers central to leadership path-goal broke new ground. It implied that leadership is not enforced on subordinates but exercised in conjunction with them, recognising that often leadership is wanted by those that are led, not imposed on them.

It was broken down into four main categories.\textsuperscript{36} **Directive leadership** involved overt command, identifying and allocating tasks, indicating how they are to be completed, the standards expected and setting deadlines. This is a style of leadership that is familiar to most leaders and commanders. Indeed, for many it is leadership. **Supportive**
leadership proposed leaders should create a harmonious working atmosphere, be mindful of subordinates needs. Indeed, one soldier recalled of the Falklands War in 1982 that

‘sometimes on exercise people get bitchy, but this never happened – probably because we kept them well informed. With well educated soldiers if you tell them what happening they will understand and live with it- whether they like it or not’\textsuperscript{37} (WO 2 McCulloch 2 Para)

The third strand was participative leadership in which leaders involve their staff in the decision making process by inviting opinions and encouraging a problem solving culture. They would never have called it such but both Montgomery and Slim clearly understood this aspect of leadership. In the wake El-Alamein Monty commented:

‘I made the soldiers partners with me in the battle. I always told them what I was going to do and what I wanted them to do. I think the soldiers felt that they mattered, they belonged.’ \textsuperscript{38}(FM Montgomery)

Likewise Slim who felt that

‘to make anyone feel part of a show you have to take them into your confidence. Soldiers have long grown out of the theirs is not to reason why stage. Any intelligent man wants to know why and for what reason he’s doing things. A little risk with security is more than repaid by the feeling that chaps get when their leaders have confidence in them, that they are let into the know, that they belong.’\textsuperscript{39} (FM Slim)

Marshal Rokossovskiy of the Red Army, a man similar in many ways to Slim agreed. Rokossovskiy commented as follows:
‘believe an old soldier: there is nothing a man prizes more than the realization that he is trusted, believed, relied upon.’

The final strand of path-goal was **achievement-orientated** leadership: leaders with high standards and expectations who demand continuous improvement. However, rather than being tyrannical authoritarians with unrealistic expectations such leaders demonstrate confidence in their subordinates and understand that excellence will not materialise overnight. Rokossovskiy whose style of leadership was very different to the prevailing authoritarian culture of the Red Army commented:

‘insistence on the highest standards is an important and essential trait for any leader. But it is equally essential for him to combine an iron will with tactfulness, respect for subordinates and the ability to rely on their intelligence and initiative.’

**Transformational Leadership: Inspiration**

Transformational leadership is concerned with the human and emotional aspects of leadership. It is about who is leading and who is being led. It responds to the perceived need to feel part of something greater than ourselves. Leaders are required to inspire the idea of outstanding achievement through personal development and hard-work.

Transformational leadership is idealistic: it is concerned with inspiring personal transformation to generate willing commitment based on the value of what is being tried to achieve, not for explicit reward. In short, if the job is worth doing it is worth doing well. It is an appealing concept in tune with the idea of inspirational leaders, setting a personal
example, motivating subordinates: an antidote to a cynical, materialist world.  

However, critics argue that transformational leadership is naive and lacks clarity. It is heavily dependent upon intangible human traits such as vision, motivation, change, inspiration, trust, selflessness and altruism. In addition, some argue it is just trait leadership with another name advocated by people with an inclination to believe they can transform others. Is transformational leadership just an intellectualisation of the trait theory school that produces dominant, self-appointed leaders who engage in little genuine interaction with followers. It has also become increasingly associated with charismatic leadership.

Charismatic Leadership

Charisma is traditionally associated with exceptional, almost mystical gifts of oratory, motivation and presence. In 1947, the German sociologist, Max Weber argued that in its true form charisma was almost superhuman, a pseudo-divine phenomenon. These individuals seem to have an aura, an arresting presence with compelling eyes and/or voice with an intense desire to influence events, confident in their own beliefs and values.

There is little doubt charismatic leaders can move people to transcend themselves, inspiring in the best examples, extraordinary endeavour, sacrifice and achievement in pursuit of a cause or in service of a leader. However, in the worst examples, it can lead to the corruption of the individual conscience in pursuit of power, personal renown or a wider cause such as Nazism, Stalinism, Mao’s Great Leap Forward etc. Charisma is often a less than objective assessment in the eyes of the beholder, a phenomenon that concerned Plato over 2,000 years ago, that
may be more accurately described as hero worship. In the desperate triumph of blind faith over reason many people need, not just want to believe, that charismatic leaders can save them in times of great uncertainty. However, charismatic leaders are frequently erratic, vain individuals, inspiring and capable of great, feats, but also nihilistic mayhem if frustrated in their cherished vision.

In the contemporary era, charismatic leadership is much sought after, rarely seen and frequently over-rated. It is not uncommon to confront the notion that if you are not a charismatic, inspiration who can transform others, you cannot be a successful leader. This can provoke the phenomenon of someone trying to be what they are not, treating others to a dose of well rehearsed ‘inspiration & charisma.’ In this author’s opinion the true meaning of Slim’s statement that ‘leadership is just plain old you’ is not a licence to be conceited but a recognition that a leader must be authentic and straight. But how can you be straight if you are pretending to be someone else? Charisma is a tremendous asset to possess, but not a disastrous impediment if you do not. Furthermore, many individuals characterised as charismatic leaders have also possessed many of the other qualities associated with leadership.

**Democratic Leadership**

Democratic leadership is the epitome of good leadership for some and a contradiction in terms for others.\(^{48}\) It has a poor image, conjuring up notions of leadership by committee, endless discussions, and paralysis by analysis, instead of decisions taken.\(^{49}\) Democratic leadership does take time, it can be used to avoid decisions and there is clear evidence that it is inappropriate in a genuine crisis.\(^{50}\)
Democratic leadership encourages discussion, ideas, distribution of responsibility and participation of subordinates.\textsuperscript{51} It places people first, on the basis that content as well as able subordinates are enthusiastic and committed. It should not mean talking shops or the suppression of dissenting views to create an artificial consensus. Indeed, under an able leader it can generate commitment, trust, initiative and inventive problem solving subordinates\textsuperscript{52} who tell leaders what they actually think, rather than conforming. Intelligent democratic leadership emphasises merit, not position, ideas not conformity and squashes rank pulling and posturing through frank but controlled exchanges. The able, unorthodox and quietly efficient find a place alongside the more forceful.

**Authoritarian/Coercive Leadership**

The authoritarian leader is a famous character in history. It is not a politically correct style of leadership, but such leaders are ‘highly effective’. They deliver results: \textsuperscript{53}for many the point of leadership. Authoritarians get a bad press, but in a crisis fraught with danger or uncertainty, authoritarian leadership can be positively beneficial by providing direction and a sense of control.\textsuperscript{54} This is why it is often associated with the military because on operations armies are frequently confronted by what most people would classify as crises. In short, the situation, the conduct of operations demands it.\textsuperscript{55}

Authoritarians are often brilliant individuals, who are committed, dedicated, with high personal standards and an unstinting sense of duty. They tend to be decisive, confident, eager to take charge and willing to accept responsibility: such people are what society identifies as natural leaders. Authoritarians exercise command easily, but tend to extract obedience: they are inclined to use leadership methods appropriate to a
crisis even if there is not one. Here leadership is imposed by power and fear of retribution. Authoritarians need to dominate. They are suspicious of new ideas, except their own, wary of discussion; in extreme cases debate is seen as a waste of time, to be almost insubordination. They are driven by the need to achieve; to use their initiative, but to retain control. Task is everything: such leaders are often obsessed, judging themselves and others harshly. Failure is not an option: those deemed responsible are cast aside. There is an expectation here that exceptional performance is normal.

In fact, there is often a deep fear of failure countered by ferocious commitment in authoritarian leadership. Extreme authoritarians dislike spontaneity, until it has been rehearsed, thereby minimising risk and re-establishing their control. For the same reason they often give great attention to detail. The devil is always in the detail, every micromanaged detail with all potential hazards is confronted through relentless, exhausting application to duty. Authoritarians are often perfectionists, micromanagers planning for the perfect exercise or operation while reminding everyone, because they know it is their duty, that no plan survives contact with the enemy.

Therefore, authoritarian leadership cultures are closely associated with conformity. Extreme authoritarian leadership cultures cannot sit easily with ideas of initiative associated with mission command & intellectual agility. In effect subordinates are exonerated from responsibility, and their use of initiative and making their own decisions. It is a seductive habit, but a dangerous one, for any organisation that requires leaders to face up to situations marked by their uncertainty, unpredictability and complexity.
Conclusions

It might be argued many excellent leaders, civilian or military, past and present, did not have a single style of leadership, but mixed and matched in accordance with the people, situation and context. Is great leadership all down to the ability to understand the nature of the situation and to devise a suitable course of action? This pragmatic problem solving approach to leadership lies at the heart of the idea of intellectual agility. However, intellectual agility is not a magical elixir: it requires judgement. Judgement is the essence of decision making, yet it is a distinctly intangible matter. Are we born with it? Can we learn it? Can you teach it? How can one develop it? Is it a matter of intellect, skills or experience or all of the above at the right time, in the right place, with the right person in the right way. This is an awful lot easier said than done. Therefore, in some respects any discussion about leadership raises as many questions as it solves: as Professor Keith Grint comments is it who a leader is that makes them a leader or is it how they do things that makes them leaders? Is it where leaders sit in an organisation that makes them leaders or what leaders achieve that makes them leaders? There are a lot of questions: what is leadership, what is the relationship between leadership, command & management, not to mention officership. What are the key qualities of an army officer and do they differ for junior and senior officers, if so why? What styles of leadership seem relevant, if any, for an army officer and which do not? Indeed, do the Army’s leaders, junior or senior, need to reflect on these questions: after all one can over complicate these matters but at the same time one can also over simplify them.
3 Ibid.
6 Keith Grint, ed., op.cit. p.5.
7 Northouse, Leadership, op.cit. p.35.
8 Ibid., pp.45-53. Northouse provides an excellent synthesis of the skills and competencies put forward by advocates of the skills approach.
9 Ibid., p.54.
10 Ibid., p.40.
11 Ibid., p.67.
13 Northouse, op.cit.p.67.
14 K. Grint, Leadership: A Very Short Introduction, (Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.4-14 provides a concise and thoughtful analysis of these different perceptions of what constitutes leadership.
15 Northouse, op.cit.p.69.
16 Ibid., p.1.
19 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p.43.
26 Ibid.,p.76.
At times in the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, on the Sinai Front, the Israeli chain of command seemed on the verge of disintegration with talented ‘reservists’ such as Major-General Ariel Sharon challenging the authority of theoretically more senior, but in his opinion less competent officers. In operational terms Sharon distinguished himself during the crossing of the Suez Canal on 16th October 1973 but he had also caused controversy in the 1956 Sinai War, at Abu Agheila in 1967 and later in 1982 in Syria.


Ibid., p.123.


Northhouse, op.cit., p.191.


Cited in Northhouse, op.cit. p.178.


K.Grint, Leadership, Oxford University Press, op.cit. pp.8-11 has a thoughtful and concise discussion on results based leadership.


Daniel Goleman, 2001, op.cit.p.82.

Butler & McManus, Psychology, op.cit. p.138 describe conformity as ‘the process by which an individual feels pressure to change his/her opinion to conform to the majority view.’

K.Grint, Leadership, Oxford University Press, op.cit. p.103.
Values Based Leadership

by Brigadier David Maddan

Aim

The aim of this note is to update and inform all commanders on the current thinking within the School of Infantry (SCHINF) with regards to Values Based Leadership in the Phase 1/2 training environment.

Definition

Values Based Leadership (VBL) is the application of an appropriate mix of inspirational and transactional leadership behaviours, underpinned by the values and standards of the British Army in order to achieve optimal performance at individual, team, and unit level.

Background

VBL was developed by SCHINF 2004-2007\(^1\). Its origins stem both from a recognition of elements of poor leadership in the training environment, as highlighted in the DHALI/Blake report\(^2\), and a commitment to reduce preventable wastage in the training pipeline. More widely SCHINF has been cognisant of the increasing gap between the core values of recruits, and in some cases trained soldiers, and those of the British Army. Academically VBL is underpinned by Transformational Leadership theory\(^3\), however it selectively uses terminology that suits a military audience. VBL draws together and formalises elements of good leadership that have been practised instinctively or consciously throughout history. More recently, the publication of Developing Leaders, A British Army Guide (Reference A)
has added greater clarity to the underpinning thinking and it provides the foundations on which VBL sits.

VBL is particularly effective in the formal training environment, especially in Phase 1/2 training establishments where the inspiration of recruits and the inculcation of the British Army’s core value system are critical to success. To that end the Infantry Training Centre (ITC) developed the Combat Infantryman’s Course 2012 (CIC12); a Phase 1/2 training course which is programmed and resourced in a way that both encourages and supports a VBL approach. Concurrently a VBL development package was designed and is delivered to all Permanent Staff instructors. This reinforces and builds on previous NCO leadership training delivered as part of CLM. More importantly it refocuses Permanent Staff instructors on core values as the fundamental basis for effective leadership, in an environment where being an exemplary role model is just as important as being an effective instructor. It also acknowledges the need for continual values and leadership education and development in NCOs, who receive far less formal leadership training than officers. The best ITC Permanent Staff are able to inspire recruits by demonstrating behaviours consistent with core values, while also recognising that recruits’ inexperience means that appropriate use of contingent reward or punishment can also be required. VBL encompasses both of these approaches and articulates why they are complimentary and necessary.
Values Based Leadership

Values and standards. Leadership is based on the moral and ethical values embedded in a leader’s character and demonstrated in their behaviour. Wider references to VBL within the business sector tend to focus on a leader using either their own personal values or those of the company in which they are employed as the basis for their approach to leadership. Within the British Army values are directed; drawn from a need to deliver a balance of aggression, restraint, and compassion, within a team context. Crucially they are applied to the Army standards, without which there is a risk of individual interpretation of Army values based on personal beliefs. It is with a consistent and overt demonstration of correct Army values that the Values Based Leader delivers their approach. Furthermore, consistent practice assists in embedding the Army’s values into the leader’s own character so that they become inherent. It is a particular hazard when leaders are seen to be hypocritical; expecting behaviours of subordinates that they fail to show themselves.

Inspirational leadership. Inspirational leadership engages the subordinate’s interest and enthusiasm and has a strong, positive influence on the subordinate’s values. Applied well it involves creating a vision of what the recruit can aspire to, supports the recruit in the pursuit of the vision, and challenges them to achieve their full potential rather than the basic standard. Academic research and experience within the ITC has shown that inspirational leadership has a positive impact on motivation, confidence, team cohesion, commitment and subordinate satisfaction; all of which positively influence individual and team performance. Inspirational leadership is underpinned by the following components:
a. **Appropriate role modelling.** The leader sets an example for subordinates to follow that is consistent with the values the leader espouses. These are the Values and Standards of the British Army, and of their regiment. The leader’s actions, behaviour and bearing are such that they represent the highest standards of professionalism and conduct; summarised in the phrase, “doing the right thing on a difficult day, when no one is watching”\(^6\).

b. **Fostering an acceptance of group goals.** The leader promotes cooperation among subordinates and gets them to work together towards a common goal. They build an effective team based on *esprit de corps*. Regimental ethos and competition are important tools that ensure individuals want to be part of and contribute to the team.

c. **Inspirational motivation.** The leader encourages the subordinate and demonstrates a confidence in their ability to achieve. They have a positive view of the future and the task in hand, assisted by enthusiasm and clarity of purpose.

d. **Intellectual stimulation.** The leader encourages subordinates to use their initiative and identify solutions to problems. They challenge them to think of how things can be done better in order to develop ownership of tasks.

e. **High performance expectations.** The leader has high but achievable expectations of subordinates for overall high performance. The leader expects subordinates to give maximum effort to achieve the best possible result, rather than coast to the minimal standard. If this is used incorrectly it carries a risk of
pushing subordinates too far, and in the training environment can result in unnecessary ‘creeping excellence’.

f. **Individual consideration.** The leader shows a respect for his subordinates and concern about their personal feelings and developmental needs. They identify and develop their strengths and correct their weaknesses through gradual development, coaching, and constructive feedback. Two way communication is vital, particularly in ensuring that subordinates know that their leader will listen to their views.

**Transactional leadership.**

Transactional leadership is based on a process of exchange whereby commanders ensure subordinates complete tasks and achieve aims through the mechanism of consequences; either getting a reward or avoiding a punishment. Within VBL it is part of supporting the subordinate to achieve their potential. Used correctly, and in balance, it remains a fundamental part of military leadership where judicious threat and use of appropriate punishment in training can achieve greater performance, teamwork and cohesion. Similarly clear links to appropriate rewards engender increased motivation to succeed, and greater feelings of satisfaction having done so. Poorly applied leadership that might appear to be transactional is where reward and punishment are not clearly linked to behaviour and performance, but are applied in an arbitrary and erratic manner, without rationale. Such leadership is de-motivating and creates mistrust and conflict within the team, often resulting in lower effort from normally high achievers and lack of commitment across the group. Good transactional leadership is based on the following:
a. **Contingent reward.** The leader rewards a subordinate’s effort, achievement and desired behaviour with praise or motivational feedback, reinforcing repetition of behaviour which elicits perceptions of fairness, commitment and trust in the leader. Rewards should rarely be in the form of additional privileges (e.g. long weekend), which do not assist in building longer term commitment to high performance. Milestone events programmed into training do assist in reward, for example awarding of regimental cap badges on passing of certain tests.

b. **Contingent punishment.** The leader punishes poor performance or unwanted behaviour. Punishment is fair, understood, and never humiliating. It can range from the leader indicating disappointment that expectations or standards have not been met, to more formal procedures. Used correctly it helps to mentally reinforce the idea that incorrect actions can have negative consequences. It adds a level of seriousness and discipline to training, and applies a degree of pressure that can improve performance and increase mental resilience.

**Appropriate application.**

Appropriate balance in the use of the inspirational and transactional elements of VBL is critical. Any single element, used in an inappropriate situation, will be ineffective or counterproductive. Sound judgement is developed through practice and a detailed understanding of the training environment. The effective use of mentors supports this development. Table 1 below provides examples of effective and ineffective indicators of good VBL.
### ITC VBL Competence Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VBL Component</th>
<th>Effective Indicators</th>
<th>Ineffective Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate Role Modelling</strong></td>
<td>‘Follow me.’</td>
<td>‘Do as I say, not as I do.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the right thing even when no one is watching.</td>
<td>• Looks over their shoulder to ‘check’ before they act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Equipment – builds recruits’ confidence in clothing and equipment by correct and consistent use.</td>
<td>• Equipment – teaches pamphlet use of equipment, but has own ‘ally’ way of doing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dress – reflects the task at hand (e.g. do not inspect recruits’ No 2 dress if dressed in combats).</td>
<td>• Dress – no consistency with recruits’ dress (e.g. worn and incoherent PT kit next to recruits who are all dressed uniformly).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Behaviour – consistently and overtly epitomises the British Army Values.</td>
<td>• Behaviour – has own interpretation of values. Has ‘on’ and ‘off’ duty persona.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fitness and bearing demonstrates the required standard. Epitomises a soldier from their regiment.</td>
<td>• Unfit and scruffy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fostering Acceptance of Group Goals</strong></td>
<td>‘Work together and you will do it.’</td>
<td>‘Every man for himself.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourages teamwork.</td>
<td>• Allows the group to drift or develop their own vision or agenda different from the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creates a single shared achievable vision for the group.</td>
<td>• Is divisive. Too often singles out individuals for praise/criticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Praises group achievements.</td>
<td>• Sits on the sidelines, detached.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Takes part in everything they expect others to do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspirational Motivation</strong></td>
<td>‘You can do it.’</td>
<td>‘You will never make it.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enthusiastic and positive in their manner.</td>
<td>• Persistently critical and negative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourages individuals and group.</td>
<td>• Casts doubt on abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual</strong></td>
<td>‘What do you think?’</td>
<td>‘What could you possibly know?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Stimulation** | • Encourages questions and discussion.  
• Develops problem solving. | • Views questions as a challenge to authority.  
• Is directive in everything. |
| **High Performance Expectations** | ‘I want you to give your best effort.’  
• Sets challenging but achievable targets.  
• Stretches each person to the best of their ability. | ‘A pass is good enough.’  
or ‘Only my standards are good enough.’  
• Accepts mediocre effort.  
• Sets unrealistic targets way beyond what is achievable or directed (creeping excellence). |
| **Individual Consideration** | ‘What do you need? Let me help you.’  
• Takes time to understand what makes each person tick.  
• Develops and coaches the individual.  
• Understands individuals also have their own values and makes links. | ‘You’re letting the whole team down.’  
• Expects everyone to reach the same standard at the same time.  
• Criticises slow learning.  
• Expects everyone to be the same as they are. |
| **Contingent Reward** | ‘Well done you have passed all of the tests, you have earned the right to wear the beret and cap badge – you should be proud of yourself.’  
• Effective use of praise.  
• Clearly links performance with achievable and appropriate reward.  
• Provides effective focused feedback and praise. | ‘I finished my PFA in 8 min 44 sec but no praise was given at all, no comments to inspire me.’  
• Ignores good performance and recruit is unaware that the standard has been met or exceeded.  
• Feedback is generic and unfocused in the form of a general ‘well done’. |
| **Support** | Contingent | Contingent |
Punishment inappropriate. Not only did you let yourself down, but it also undermined the trust we have built in the team. You have been briefed on this before so now you can expect AGAI 67 action.’

- Punishment is in an approved form and delivered without malice.
- Punishment is openly and clearly explained as a consequence, and followed through if required.

today, now you are all going to suffer.’

- Punishments are randomly made up and delivered in a hateful or gleeful and adhoc manner.
- Recruit sees no link between punishment and cause.
- Groups are punished for individual errors.

Table 1: ITC VBL Competence Framework.

Summary.

The persistent application of the principles of VBL across the chain of command, with a strong commitment to getting the best out of all personnel, has had a significant impact within SCHINF. Leaders who create a climate of trust, motivation and achievement, underpinned by the values and standards of the British Army, can raise the overall output of the organisation and assist in retention. VBL is entirely consistent with existing RMAS led leadership guidance and, whilst well suited to the training environment, has much wider applicability across the British Army.

References:
B. A British Soldier’s Values and Standards, AC 63812, Mar 08.

1 From studies at RMCTC and SCHINF by L. Hardy et al, Bangor University Institute for the Psychology of Elite Performance.
2 DHALI/Blake (Directorate of Op Capability; House of Commons Defence Committee; Adult Learning Inspectorate/Nicholas Blake QC) Reports into deaths of recruits in training at Deepcut 1995-2002.
3 Developed originally by James MacGregor Burns, Leadership, 1978, and subsequently adapted widely.
4 Detailed in Reference B: Courage, Discipline, Respect for Others, Integrity, Loyalty, Selfless Commitment.
5 Detailed in Reference B: Lawful, Appropriate, and Totally Professional.
6 Abridged from Lt Gen Sir Graeme Lamb.
7 Recruit response taken from ‘Effectiveness of instructor behaviours and their relation to leadership’ Patrick et al, 2009.

The Three-Circles Model
The Commandant has asked me to speak briefly about the Three-Circles Model. My plan is to talk to you for about 10 minutes and then leave the remaining allotted 20 minutes for discussion.

First, some Sandhurst history. I joined the staff here in January 1961 as the fourth member of the newly formed Military History Department but very soon became interested in the leadership development aspects of Sandhurst and came up with some ideas. After various trials and debuts the whole Academy ran the first functional Leadership course in 1964. That is, all 12 companies simultaneously ran a one-and-a half day training course, conducted by their company commanders. My responsibility was to enable them to do it at a professional effective level. For being a competent military leader, a necessary requisite for any officer joining the staff here, doesn't necessarily imply ability to teach the subject.

I left Sandhurst in 1969. From 1970 onwards, with the end of the two-year course, Sandhurst was in the grip of ceaseless change of one sort or another. The Functional Leadership course mentioned above fell victim to these changes but the Three-Circles Model somehow survived and continued to be seen as central.

Now you may wonder why it survived so long. After all, 1964 is 50 years ago! Surely, you may think, Sandhurst should be teaching the latest theory and not something from some 50 years ago! Add to that, since 1969 a whole great Leadership Industry has emerged, with two main branches: commercial and academic. So there is no shortage of contenders in the market. It is easy to fall victim to the 'Newer-is-Truer' heresy.

It is worth recollecting that in the hundred years before 1964 there were no more than 20 books worldwide with 'Leadership' in their titles. By contrast, the
American Library of Congress records over 75,000 such books, not to mention a whole tsunami of articles and research papers.

It is worth adding at this point that RAF Cranwell (1967), the Royal Navy (1968), the Royal Marine Commandos (1969), the Australian Army, the Australian Air Force and New Zealand Army (1973) are also still basing their leadership training on the foundation of the Three-Circles Model? WHY?

One answer often given is that the Model is SIMPLE and easy to remember ('A picture is worth a thousand words'). True, but I must add that it is not simplistic or superficial; it has the property that mathematicians describe as being 'deep'.

Another common answer is that it WORKS.

And beyond the training course itself there is impressive evidence that the Three-Circles Model, if properly taught, can serve as a foundation for each officer to build their own practical philosophy of leadership. In the last year I have heard or read that General Lord Dannatt, General Sir Mike Jackson and Colonel Bob Stewart (UN Commander in Bosnia) all claiming that leadership began for them at Sandhurst when they were taught the 'Three-Circles'.

But WHY does it work?

Over recent years an answer has emerged. What we stumbled on those years ago turned out to be THE GENERIC ROLE OF LEADER. So that underlying all the various forms of leader, such as commander, manager, or conductor there is a generic role determined by the expectations that we all have in our DNA. And the Three-Circles captures that generic role visually, just as the Double Helix does in a different context. Not a theory but the truth, and that's what makes it so solid and reliable.
So Functional Leadership works because it equips aspiring or actual leaders with knowledge of the generic role of leader, with TRAINING in the key generic FUNCTIONS that meet or fulfil that role.

So what we had at Sandhurst was BOTH an intellectual breakthrough AND an equally ground-breaking group-centred approach to learning.

The case for rebuilding the Functional Leadership training course at Sandhurst might be reinforced by these considerations:

1. There is a competitive advantage in having all three Services using the same basic generic model of leadership, though of course the applications will be very different according to the Service context.

2. There are three broad levels of leadership responsibility: Team, Operational and Strategic. The Three-Circles Model remains the same at all levels but the complexity level increases the higher you go. The Staff College now teaches the Model at Strategic level, together with the seven strategic leadership functions, each student receiving a copy of my 'Strategic Leadership' Again there is a competitive advantage in the same Model working at both below and above Lt Col level.

3. The Model has already served to integrate three approaches to understanding leadership into one: Qualities, Situational and Functional. (West Point even in the 1960s was also teaching these three approaches as 'Be, Know and Do', but they were not integrated in the way we developed at Sandhurst).

In its role as an integrating model, the Three-Circles approach could easily accommodate some sessions on Values, especially where the focus is upon professional ethics in the military field.
Some issues that arose in Question Time:

Q. *Why has the academic world ignored you and your Three-Circle Model?*

A. Basically because Leadership Studies is focused on STUDY while I have always been focused on LEARNING. Learning implies usually learning to DO something, such as to ride a bicycle, to speak French or how to play golf. It is a practical activity, with two focal points: the selection and the training of leaders. By contrast you can study wild flowers or the African tribal system or the distant stars or American leadership theories without any thought of actually DOING anything.

Q. *What are the ways of getting leadership training wrong?*

A. There is only one way of getting it right, though there are acceptable variations within that way. The ways of getting it wrong are many and varied. Here are some examples:

1. Reproducing the three-Circles Model but getting it wrong in shape or wording; this I find is quite frequent now.

2. Failure to think clearly and hard about content and methods.

3. Lack of adequate training for the trainers.

4. Not servicing both the content and methods at regular intervals. How long would you run a Rolls Royce aero engine without servicing it or taking it back to the maker for a complete overhaul?

5. Failure to develop a specialist to act as continuity and help to induct new military staff in the art of group-centred learning.
6. Allowing accretions to creep in so that the ivy eventually begins to strangle the tree.

7. Imagining that you have to teach an officer cadet everything there is to know in the world about leadership, as opposed to just laying a simple minimal foundation to be built upon later.
Ethics: Military Judgment Panel

by

The Revd Dr PJ McCormack

Background

British Army Doctrine\(^1\) highlights the significance of morality and ethics. It states that ‘the moral component provides the Army’s ability to get its people to operate and to fight, and is built upon 3 priceless commodities: ethical foundations, moral cohesion and motivation.’\(^2\) The ethical foundation is an essential component not only of the Army’s culture but also of its operational behaviour and ability to successfully deliver against Defence policy assumptions. The Army’s capability in complex operational environments will be enhanced by its aptitude in dealing with ‘real-world’ ethical problems. The Army is required to be a component of a ‘Force for Good’, therefore the ethical component is likely to have both an operational and strategic effect. The successful application of military force, in context of its effect on the audiences the Army will seek to influence, necessitates that the ethical application of force will be more rather than less important and will require a more nuanced understanding of the ethical context. To facilitate a co-ordinated and combined approach to training and preparing for the ethical/moral dimension to Land Forces’ operations, a 1* Military Judgement Panel (MJP)\(^3\) was formed in 2013 to direct the work of a newly created post of SO1 Ethics.

Need

At first meeting of the MJP the proposition that a good understanding (at the right level) of the Army’s Values and Standards (V&S) in combination with the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) would equip officers and soldiers with a complete, robust and effective ethical framework for operations was considered at some length. The
consensus was that while V&S in combination with LOAC was absolutely essential, they are not sufficient in equipping officers and soldiers with the necessary “tool box” with which to deal with “real-world” ethical problems in complex operational environments. It was noted that the future operational environment, as envisaged in FCOC, will likely see an increase in “wicked problems” which will undoubtedly result in increasing numbers of ethical dilemmas faced by our people. The ethical component is likely to have both an operational and strategic effect.

The MJP explored four areas where better ethical understanding at the right levels would benefit the Army.

- Lawful actions which may be unethical. These include the appropriate use of force (the balance between too much and not enough); targeting on the basis of intelligence; collateral damage, killing and wounding of non-combatants; the effect of operations on the population, buildings, culture and the environment. These broadly fall under the heading of the application of Just War Doctrine (*Jus in Bello*).

- Partnering and multinational operations. Example issues that might arise include: sharing of risk and danger; differing cultural, ethical and legal frameworks of different states and actors; and medical and CPERS provision.

- Protection against deliberate attacks on the Army’s (and the UK’s) integrity. Many observers have commented on the scope for enemy strategy and tactics to deliberately draw us into acting unethically or unlawfully resulting in operational/strategic effect. Our people need the understanding to be able to counter this threat.

- The reduction of the risk of unethical command climates emerging. The MJP discussed a number of examples where unlawful behaviour by soldiers
had apparently been facilitated, consciously or unconsciously, by an inappropriate command climate. This was either deliberate or reckless (and often powerful and charismatic) and unethical, or inadvertent (e.g. low force levels). An aspect of this education and training would need to show officers how to recognize these situations and effective ways of dealing with them.

**Governance**

The MJP recognized that it was essential to seek the appointment of a suitable proponent for ethics and the Army. The panel thought that DPS(A) might be the right person and approached AG for his approval. AG endorsed the principle of DPS(A) as the proponent, noting the natural and strong link to V&S.

![Ethics: Military Judgement Panel](image)

**Figure 1**

Figure 1 offers a representation of the governance and supporting resources to the Proponent.
The Proposal

The role of the Proponent, will be:

1. To maintain and develop the ethical component by:
   a. Informing the maintenance and development of the ethical component of Army doctrine.
   b. Advise on the requirement for ethical training and education across the Army.
   c. Provide advice on ethics policies to the chain of command.

While DPS(A) is the proponent for ethics in the Army and policy lead on this specific subject matter, the role of the proponent is also to draw on particular Subject Matter Expert (SME) advice and capability. The Royal Army Chaplains’ Department (RACHD) and the 1* MJP for ethics will function as capability resources for the Proponent (in terms of advice, knowledge and potential resource capacity). In addition, an academic advisory group chaired by SO1 Ethics, functioning under the direction of the MJP for ethics, will be established to provide supplementary SME advice to the Proponent through the MJP.

The judgement of the MJP is that the appropriate entry point in this process is the officer education and training pathway because the concept of the ethical climate within a unit is a function of command. The through-life officer education and training pathway therefore represents ‘The Golden thread’ within which the ethical component will be interwoven.
Theoretical Ideas

Moral philosophy is not a science and there is no one ethical theory that applies to every situation and supplies a perfect answer to every ethical question\textsuperscript{xvi}. Such recognition, however, offers little help to a moral agent faced with a complex ethical situation. Alasdair MacIntyre\textsuperscript{5}, argues that the reality facing the moral agent is compounded by an even greater problem. It is his contention that although we possess a ‘simulacra of morality’, in that we continue to use many of the key expressions used in ethical debate, we have lost our comprehension of the substance that underpins the ethical language we use\textsuperscript{6}. Although the use of abstract moral reasoning may be contrary to a traditional approach to ethics within the British Army, a lack of understanding of the substance from which our ethical language is derived may result in a widespread use of expressions substantively loosed from the foundation that gives the expressions their validity and meaning.

The absence of a comprehensive ethical framework covering the whole officer educational and training pathway, incorporating RMAS through to ICSC(L), from which training objectives maybe derived is an issue that requires consideration. However, any consideration of an ethical framework does not necessarily require the deliberate abandonment of either an osmosis approach to ethics and ethos or the deliberate selection of one ethical theory over another. Rather, a blended approach to ethical training and education that equips officers for the ‘moral maze’ of modern life, might offer the military practitioner a varied skill set that provides genuine substance to the ethical language used.

Figure 2 offers an example of what a theoretical framework might look like when applied to the through-life officer education and training pathway. It is offered not as a final and settled position but as a ‘think piece’.
Virtue ethics deals with the character of the moral agent. It focuses upon excellence of character; a character that is grown and developed within a community that values and espouses such qualities. A virtue is always bracketed by a vice that emphasises the required virtue. So for example, the virtue courage is bracketed by cowardice and recklessness. Virtue ethics emphasises balance in an individual’s character: Aristotle’s ‘Golden Mean’. Figure 3 offers a theoretical application of this Aristotelian ‘Golden Mean’ to the Army’s six core values.
The advantage of understanding the six core values as virtues is that it allows them to be imagined by officers and soldiers as being the average or norm expected of the professional soldier (Aristotelian ‘Golden Mean’) and not a high standard to seek to attain. Each is understood and interpreted by the ‘vices’ that reside on the left and right of arc. The inclusion of an amber strip illustrates the human reality that there are moments when the moral agent may begin to stray from the centre and the norm. This allows the chain of command, or friends and colleagues, to help the moral agent relocate him/herself back into the green.
How the Project Might Develop

Under the direction of the MJP and the Proponent for Ethics, SO1 Ethics has been tasked with:

• Drafting a paper to present to the Army Command Group on Ethics.
• Speaking to the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land) about ethics, morality and leadership.
• Giving a presentation on the Commanding Officers’ Designate Course on the proposition that: the creation and maintenance of an appropriate ethical climate within a unit is a function of command.
• Giving a presentation to the Senior Officers Briefing Course on the ethical component in multidimensional manoeuvre warfare.
• Working in conjunction with Col Training, the Leadership Team at the Royal Military College Sandhurst and Army Training, Policy and Plans on submitting ethical descriptors into the training needs analysis on initial officer training.
• Offering ethics symposiums to major units in the Field Army.
• Offering study days on ethics, specifically in relation to future conflict and population-centric operations as part of offering this level of study and reflection to the Adaptive Force brigades as they prepare for the span of homeland resilience, forward engagement and contingent operations.
• Presenting an academic paper on ethics at the European chapter of the International Society for Military Ethics.

1 ADP Operations, AC 71940 dated Nov 10, Section 2 paragraphs 0218 – 0222.
2 Ibid., paragraph 0218.
3 Comd CTG, DLW, DPS(A)), DCG, DAD, Comdt LWS, rep DTrg(A) and rep Comdt RMAS and DG Leadership.
4 AGAI 56 Training Requirements Authorities, Vol2, paragraph 56.002.
6 Alasdair MacIntyre is one of the world’s leading moral philosophers and is credited with reintroducing virtue ethics into ethical thinking in the twentieth century.
Defining and Developing Officership: an International Military Capability

by

Patrick Mileham

Crisis in Officership?

‘Chinese officership’, concluded a young Army Air Corps officer on returning from an exchange with the Chinese Army under training, ‘is not the same as British officership’. In the same BBC TV News Programme interview on 25 April 2014, he and his British companion had found substantial differences in the culture and position of young officers, their relative autonomy of judgement and responsibilities.

We all know about practice of command and management. To these military dynamics we know as much about the concept and practice of leadership. How leaders lead is well rehearsed in the literature, even if defining it both precisely and in general terms is problematic. Undoubtedly the art of commanding and leading in the military, generating sufficient fighting determination and spirit, goes far in winning wars. The same leadership determines good faith and restraint in winning the peace. What more is there to say?

While we in Britain as pragmatists are sceptical about abstract nouns, with the advent of doctrine there also exists the dynamic of military ‘officership,’ a substantial concept, practice and capability which is omnipresent amongst all who serve in self-proclaimed professional armed forces everywhere. Fact or phenomenon? To understand we have to dig below the surface of the conceptual, physical and moral components of military capability. ‘Dare to be wise’, wrote the Roman poet Horace thinking of the conceptual, so no real crisis. However mental effort about first
principles, ‘forms and universals’², is definitely needed, not only empirical enquiry and trial and error.

As a definition the term ‘officership’ has existed in the English language since 1775, ‘the rank or position of an officer, a staff of officers’³. ‘Skill’ and ‘capability’ are attributed to directly associated definitions. However, unlike the word generalship, officership did not feature in Britain’s armed forces until 2004, when it became part of the syllabus of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Ten years on it is in need of revision and tri-Service validation, as well as placing firmly in the international context.

Firstly the above Oxford English Dictionary (OED) definition describes the officer corps and chain of command. An implicit understanding of the words ‘rank’ and ‘position’ indicates graduated responsibilities of persons who hold military ‘office’. For a clearer understanding appropriate alternatives to the word ‘position’, are ‘post, appointment, capacity, role, function, duty, authority and agency’⁴.

A working definition of officership therefore is the concept, performance, character and quality of professional military office and those who hold it. My aim is to suggest a comprehensive group of first or primary principles in order to promote international discussion and greater understanding of the subject. The profession of arms, no less.

The civil-military relationship

Every nation has a relationship to its armed forces, particularly its army. As a first principle, the ‘objective control’ of the military institutions by the civil power⁵ is paramount, one of the defining characteristics of democracy. The Army has to reflect faithfully the best of the nation and its population. The quality of relationships between persons holding office in the armed forces is equally important within the hierarchy of rank. These relationships, significantly, are both professional and
personal - which is where leadership comes in. The distinctions should be well understood.

In 1957 using the term officership, US author Samuel Huntington wrote expressing the complex nature of the professional standing of military officials and the civil-military relationship within a liberal democracy. He declared self-evidently ‘officership as a profession’\(^6\). The implication is one of mutual trust between the officer and the state. That might be a first principle for the military profession, but not necessarily for the same person who is also a citizen\(^7\) within a liberal democracy, with civic as well as military duties. ‘A profession’, Huntington continued, ‘is a peculiar type of functional group with highly specialized characteristics’. True, but special characteristics often involve many other principles. For instance very many of the ‘specialized characteristics’ have changed, with wider responsibilities and much more specialist functions required by governments and populations of their militaries. The gap between ‘the officer corps’ and ‘enlisted corps’\(^8\) has narrowed in many military institutions since the 1950s, for good reason.

While featuring in the military lexicon of the US armed forces, notably in the US Army, and the Canadian Defence Force, officership, or a single term similar in other languages, has not been adopted formally for use by other nations, as far as I am aware\(^9\). Every nation, however, has a formal and informal relationship with its armed forces and military officials, whether or not such a collective word is used. So the concept and practice of officership exists in some form, usually \textit{sine nomine}, in virtually all 192 recognized nation-states of the world.

Because of the specialized nature of the military profession one can see the embodiment of a person as the civil-military relationship, with attendant moral, physical and conceptual obligations, albeit regulated by formal military discipline. For a nation without a clearly defined written constitution, legal instruments and arrangements exist defining the military’s relationship with the constitutional and
political institutions. Civil-military relationships of course differ from nation to nation, as recognized in the first paragraph above.

The factors of national military-civil relationships were also articulated, nearly two hundred years ago, by Clausewitz, the master of military first principles, concepts and practices. He called it the inter-related dynamics of ‘people, the commander and his army and the government.’\(^{10}\) He also wrote about ‘moral forces’ provided by the synergy of the three components above, including the habit and culture of ‘fighting spirit’. Note the position of ‘commander’, the supreme appointed office-holder amongst office-holders. Note also that the sort of government he was writing about accurately described the youthful, democratic USA as well as all other types of governments at the time of writing in the 1820s.

Circumstances have changed, but Clausewitz’s thinking about nations and their military institutions remains firm. Seeking to explain and understand the same phenomenon, or first principle, the British Army itself conceived recently what it deemed a ‘moral understanding’, between the same three parties, in a package of ideas and actions comprising ‘the military covenant’.\(^{11}\) In addition to constitutions and laws, all nations have some such moral understanding, healthy or unhealthy, even if unarticulated in any meaningful sense. A moral understanding is one thing; what universals, primary principles and ethics consist in is something else.

Today moral philosophy and military service are being brought together enthusiastically by academics and practitioners in articulating the principles of military ethics. The rest of this paper takes account of custom, practice, law and military regulation in general, but also the moral understandings in recognition of the voluntariness which motivates persons in the professional armed forces of the democracies. Commonality of officership facts and factors can be found in the next two sections, while differences lie chiefly in the section on military cultures.
**Officership: constitutional and legal**

State sovereignty implies the existence of a constitution as the fountainhead of all political, social and much economic activity within the state and its relations with other states. Sovereignty is dominated and defined by a number of institutions, such as a law-making body as a means of political representation, an independent judicial system, a currency, a civil service, as well as civil police and armed forces, who provide for national security and the monopoly of violence. All such components operate within a recognized geographical territory, supported by a largely consensual population recognizing the above components. That is the theory.

Thus taking Huntington’s arguments further, nowadays armed forces’ personnel are given due recognition in today’s democratic nations as holders of not only a specialized military office, but a significant public office, both respective and irrespective of rank. Rank brings varying degrees of professional responsibility and trust, from commander-in-chief through the ranks to the corporal and equivalent in other services, and including enlisted persons. They all have onerous, specialist duties connected with fighting capability.

Most mature military institutions have a large array of legal instruments and regulations for promoting and maintaining disciplined conduct. Self-disciplined motivation is also demanded from members of the corporate body of professionals, who can rely on each other in extreme conditions. Functional-technical reliance is one thing for the efficient and objective delivery of military capability; legal and moral reliance is another. This leads to consideration of faithfulness to the fact of holding public office, often way above above any contractual factors.

Many nations adopt what is also expressive of another primary principle. They require an oath of personal service, or oath of office, to be sworn by their soldiers, sailors and air personnel, to the constitution or to head of state. It is a legal procedure invoked before military service begins, a promise both in general and in advance.
to be true to a range of explicit and implicit professional demands. Truth, integrity is what is promised, to meet many specified and regulated imperatives, as well as general and unspecified expectations, and sometimes shocking surprises. The deep significance of a military oath is often overlooked and barely thought about in regard to questions of constitution and sovereignty. The moment of truth came on 3rd March 2014 for the Ukrainian Rear-Admiral Deres Berezovsky, who took a new oath of allegiance in public to the Crimean Russian authorities, and tried to induce (unsuccessfully) his subordinate officers also to do so. It was an example of wavering officership on the one side, and on the other, officership faithfully upheld.

Most nations have explicit legal documents, the military Commission, or similar, another tangible primary principle. For other nations the wordage is to be found, more or less, in published military regulations having the force of law. The US, British, Canadian (bi-lingual), Australian and New Zealand Commissions are almost identically worded, coming from the same 18th century source. The wording is old fashioned but comprehensible and unequivocal. My view, and that of other authors, is that a document, given to only a very few groups of public officials, in highly significant because it places such persons in a categorical ‘fiduciary relationship’ directly with other people, the significant words being ‘especial trust and confidence’.

These two abstract nouns are not accidental tautology. The statement means the named person is held to a duty of double trust, to act with fidelity and truth, person to person, but also in general company. Significantly and quite independently, these are the exact same words found in another seeming deliberate tautology in civilian usage, denoting the position of a trustee, ‘a fiduciary’ in English law, specifically that of Equity and Trusts. Whether written into a legal deed of trust or military commission document, the understanding of the adjective fiduciary indicates a significant moral relationship. That brings us back to the professional basis of the civil-military understanding in a liberal democracy.
The expression ‘confidence’ has many meanings. It includes an extension of trust generally, signifying mutual faith between all parties. It can also strengthen physical and moral courage and a spirit of risk-taking above the call of ordinary duty. Such attention to duty should endure long-term. The individual’s oath of service and the expected imperatives of the commission holders continue until final discharge from office\textsuperscript{17}. These significant facts make many who join for military service feel they are entering into a vocation, a true calling in which sacrifice is implicit, even of life. Many would argue that this too constitutes an undoubted primary principle, validated by free-will, volunteer military service.

The facts also emphasise that faithful service cannot only be the preserve of commissioned officers, but all who hold Warrant and other appointments of military office of any rank. The combined strength of the confidence of the officers corps and the non-commissioned cadre (whatever terms are used), commanding and leading the army, navy and air force of a nation at all levels with responsibility and probity, provides a significant capability of fighting power. General Sir John Hackett spoke in 1970 that ‘Military institutions…. form a repository of moral resource that should always be a source of strength within the state’\textsuperscript{18}. Today’s German armed forces inculcate in all their personnel the guiding spirit of Innere Führung, self-discipline, self-control, conscience. Such are guaranteeing factors of character, altruism and absolute personal integrity.

Finally in this section, the justification for going to war (\textit{jus ad bellum}) and criteria for rightful conduct in war (\textit{jus in bello}) as expressed in international law, includes that of ‘competent authorities’, both civil and military. The status of combatants is significant, even if becoming more difficult to judge. It is defined, \textit{inter alia}, as the requirement ‘To be commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates’\textsuperscript{19}, in a word a commander. This too is an explicit and inescapable primary principle and duty of all military persons who hold command, commissioned or non-commissioned, the unequivocal pre-condition of officership as a legal status.
internationally recognized. Under coalition conditions or operating in territory say under a Memorandum of Understanding, the exercise of ‘responsible’ military command and authority is enabled, the legal status as combatants holds good for professional military persons in theatre. This is a significant fiduciary pre-condition for commanders, many of whom may be of quite junior rank.

**Officership: functional and professional**

The next principles can be grouped as those of function, agency and profession. Agency is about ‘the power to affect the world’, in general and in detail, ‘by producing actions’\(^\text{20}\). Command is a function of military agency. Space precludes discussion of command in detail and ‘agency theory’ and practice, but military agency is what commanders profess to do, their people being ‘agents’. To profess is to assert and avow. The employment of those who serve in armed forces, both in commissioned and non-commissioned capacities, differs from nation to nation, but there are many factors which are general. Functional and professional factors can be taken as follows\(^\text{21}\), how military peoples’ time and talents find occupation.

**Combat.** The command, training and deployment on operations of soldiers, sailors and air personnel is a central function, professionally specialist. A high proportion of those employed serve in Combat (infantry, armour and naval or air offensive) and Combat Support arms (artillery, engineers, signals, intelligence and information systems personnel), and those on warships and air squadrons directly exposed and engaged in the combat function. Many Combat Support persons are professionals twice over; in an army, for example, a trained soldier and qualified engineer. The Combat Service Support arms includes soldiers, sailors and air personnel occupied in logistics and personnel functions, being deployable on operations with their own self-defence combat function.

**Technical and Logistics.** The technical specialization of policy, training, support, research and development functions of armed forces are conducted by
commissioned and non-commissioned officers as well as MOD civilians and contractors. Provision and movement of supplies, medical and technical support, research and development, materiel acquisition and procurement also become large-scale functions in which management and direction provide significant capability. Many persons progress in their careers from the Combat functions noted above to technical roles. In all professions and occupations the tendency is for people to rise from specialist functions to generalist roles, from operatives and administrators to managerial occupations, and then on to directorial roles, performed by senior people.

Human resources. Human resource specialists have been growing in importance and number as the military profession becomes more sophisticated. All members of armed forces need to be supported by the right sort of management and direction to meet professional imperatives. There are huge demands on people’s intellectual, emotional and physical capabilities given all the contradictions and paradoxes of operations in the increasingly globalized world. Domestic and international employment law, health and safety, duty of care, and the international law of human rights are all becoming more and more central and mentally testing.

Defence policy. The existence of armed forces and their use in Combat functions and other roles, including aid to the civil power and humanitarian relief, has to be directed by the civil power as an already-mentioned primary principle. Increasingly armed forces officers are becoming engaged in activities which have a political, social and economic component. The devolution of budgetary responsibilities to armed forces officers in many nations is another significant feature of military service. Conversely politicians and civil servants are taking on responsibilities closer to the military front-line. Even junior ranks can become involved during operations in politico-military and economic-related functions.

For the delivery of security, fighting power and defence capability the actual institutional environments where military people are employed are fairly consistent, if
uneven, across the nations. They can be categorized as ground force units, ships and air squadrons; training and educational institutions; higher level operational groupings and formations, including joint and combined or alliance forces; headquarters and civilian management agencies; international training establishments; ministries of defence and agencies for defence procurement and logistics.

The present day and future responsibilities, within the above functional activities and professional roles, require commissioned officers and increasingly non-commissioned officers, to possess substantially enhanced personal and professional qualities. Such persons are employed for their command, leadership and management roles and expertise. Initially on joining and subsequently for promotion, personal and professional skills, competences, and potential capabilities have to be assessed and assured. Constituting another group of primary principles, the following criteria and aptitudes can be generally identified as part of the capability of successfully holding military office. Individuals need to possess identifiable and measurable:

- Intellectual ability, including thinking and communicating conceptually.
- Specialist professional and technical skills and wider general understanding.
- Self-discipline to meet substantial responsibilities.
- Conscience, a sense of reliability and moral courage.
- Depth of Character.
- Potential and ability to lead, motivate and develop others.
- Commitment beyond normal duty *in extremis*.
- Emotional control, particularly in command functions*22*.
Such personal and professional requirements are matters for national armed forces to determine, assess and develop in their people. They should be in accord with the conception of the officership which the subject nation wants to promote and sustain at each rank and specialization. However, how they organize and assess their professional personnel needs to be set in the context of national culture and the cultural dynamics of the armed force, as well as the different environments of land, sea, and air.

**Officership: cultural and human**

The above sections have dwelt on the ideology of a professional occupation. How the profession lives and works on a daily basis exposes rather different questions. This section can only briefly cover the subject of military cultures, where the greatest national differences can be found. That having been said, cultures and human beings who form them can hardly be removed from a strong connexion with primary principles. In those nations with a long unbroken institutional and war-fighting history, cultural practices are often of the nature of phenomena, reaching far back into history, hard to unravel let alone prove to be useful or useless, consisting in strengths or weaknesses. A newly formed military institution may struggle to instil and develop a strong corporate military culture into its working practices, including the sort of ‘moral forces’ and fighting spirit mentioned above. The civil military-relationship and how the armed forces identify with and reflect national society and aspirations, is crucial.

*Esprit de Corps; la morale?* Assuming good humour always has a place in the military profession one has to accept many manifestations of national and institutional cultures, however inexplicable. *Vive la différence; à chacun son goût.* National military symbolism, rites and rituals\textsuperscript{23}, habits and customs, subcultures, language, interpersonal networking and processes of communication, values and
internal relationships, as well as psycho-social anthropological details of every sort are often greatly significant to the profession, and to the general population. In some armies, unit distinctiveness and cohesiveness, based on combat and cultural history, can be of great importance in furthering their efforts to possess Clausewitzean ‘moral force’, with stories of legendary heroes who performed daring and courageous exploits. The culture of risk-taking is a particular dynamic.

The constitutional, functional and cultural distinction between commissioned officers and non-commissioned ranks is also significant, but more so is the strength of the professional partnership between the same groupings. Ability for cultural change, alongside externally-driven functional and professional change is equally important. Those who hold office in the military need to handle change like any other professional, but more so because lives are at risk. Adopt obviously what is best of new developments, but adapt and preserve what is the best of the old.

Cross-cultural understanding, including the ability to cope with what one might call alien cultures and, in particular, adversarial cultures, is likewise a matter of consideration as part of the quality of officership. It is a curious fact that often even intelligent people, while coping intuitively, do not understand the depths of their own personal and national cultural motivation and are surprised when they witness other cultures at work. This is a matter of education and the sort of leadership insight required to gain a deeper understanding of the human condition both at home and abroad. Cultural awareness is a significant factor in military operations and institutions generally.

National cultures also affect the recruitment and regenerating of armed forces. Tentatively the substance of culture within the dynamics of daily living in the community is as follows:24:
• Sense of nationhood and national life.

• Type and effectiveness of government.

• Respect of laws, legal institutions and processes.

• Value of life and personal health.

• Personal and institutional psycho-philosophical values.

• Religious traditions.

• Demographics within the population.

• Livelihoods, job security and prosperity.

• Educational opportunities.

• Levels of violence and crime.

• Social divisions, tolerance and acceptance of diversity.

These social-anthropological factors also affect the perceptions of defence and the activities of the officership (the collective ‘staff of officers’) at the higher level, of which military professionals are trustees. How? The details are - perception of defence needs; history of civil-military relations and current standing of the military reputation in civil life; military traditions, ethos and prestige; willingness of young persons to volunteer to join and remain in military service; the democratic will of the population for their armed forces to conduct military operations; national cultural change and the perceptions of future national and international life.

Much has been written about leadership and the military. One of the chief human dynamics, with a culture of its own momentum, is how leaders lead within the confines of the institution and beyond. Leaders are ‘agents’, they get things done. The term leadership, however, is an uneasy one. It can be made to mean virtually anything
positive in human interaction. Chiefly it is about a leader or leaders inspiring voluntary effort above mere formal duty. Such agency is needed in contexts of significant choices, fundamental change and high risk, often causes of anxiety and much real fear.

While officership is the formal act of holding office and its obligations, how officers (of any rank) lead becomes an intensely human activity. Officership and leadership are twin adjuncts, corollaries of each other, the objective and impersonal side of the coinage joined to the subjective and human side. Of necessity leadership is strongly ethically based in persons who need intellect and intuition to cope with immediate problems and actions while searching for the common good, universally. Leading would-be friends and former enemies towards peace is the supreme test of a military leader. Acting in good faith is the truth of the matter. But nothing can happen without context of people and the formal ‘position’ and responsibility of the leader-official, which brings us back to the OED definition of officership. In essence the unique personal character and conduct of the individual becomes the public office. The public office identifies the person.

Taken all together, all nations and every national armed force has to be aware and take account of such cultural matters in their own way, but also have the imagination to recognize and accept how other nations see themselves and their armed forces. Institutional ethos, identity and reputation go together.

The power of ideas

Ideology and theory meeting with practice is always a fascinating occupation for academics and practitioners. How constitutional, legal and functional realities affect the perceived professional, individual and cultural substance of military individuals’ roles in democratic societies are considerations which should be of deep
interest for the profession of arms. The power of ideas and words should never be underestimated, including I hope the usefulness of the substance of this paper.

I offer some provisional conclusions. Albeit in a different order than they appear in the body of the work, the following primary or universal principles of officership, whether or not in command, are suggested.

- Civil primacy personified in the civil-military relationship.
- Concept of public office, command and profession.
- Fiduciary obligation, confirmed by oath, promoting and sustaining mutual trust.
- The Commission, Warrant and formal appointment procedures.
- Authority of rank and appointment, particularly under international law.
- Duty of agency and management function.
- Military capability of corporate fighting power.
- Risk and the vocational nature of membership of the profession of arms.
- Leadership potential and personal authority.
- Human capability, character and quality of the individual.
- Military culture as a benign and cohesive ‘moral force’.
- Ethical responsibilities of the military-citizen towards human-kind.

It is hoped that an international debate can follow.

Finally General Sir John Hackett saw the profession of arms as a special profession, with many characteristics that were irrespective of, if not far above national factors and characteristics, without losing the moral strength of individual
military institutions. He wrote that ‘the major service of the military institution’ in future could well lie ‘in the moral sphere’, based on the quality of its people and their part in reconciliation, *jus post bellum*. He also wrote of commanders, of officership without using the term, thus.

‘The officer is endowed with the power of coercion. In a society of free men this power cannot be safely bestowed on those who do not have the detachment and liberality of mind to use it wisely’.

He also affirmed that a military person is employed *in extremis*, a professional agent, but with a sense of being part of humanity, for the ‘ordered application of force under an unlimited liability’. As an analogy it is true, but modified by the reality of liberal democratic principles. That makes everyone an office-holder of one description or another, trustees, fiduciaries of their military institution, and equally the international identity, dignity and integrity of the profession of arms.

To end with a question, what does the Chinese officer think of British Army officership?

**References**

1. Professor John Adair, speaking at the COMEC / Sandhurst leadership conference on 5 September 2013, estimated that some 75,000 books have been written on leadership in the past 50 years.
2. Plato and Aristotle battled over these different epistemological approaches, and their followers ever since.
Googling the word ‘officership’ on the web brings countless US and Canadian references. Exhortations to vocational service predominate, particularly in the former. The Baltic Defence College, Tartu, Estonia have a faculty of ‘Officership and Management’, its official English language title.


www.gov.uk/the-armed-forces-covenant accessed 1 May 2014. Without going into detail, this type of covenant, or accord, cannot be a formal contract. It is a moral understanding between individual soldiers, sailors and air personnel to be predisposed towards willingly accepting extra occupational risk, acting with fidelity and providing trusted service in return for guaranteed personal goods and services, of recognized value to them and their dependants.

Arguably since the Nuremberg Tribunal findings in 1945-6 about the extent of obedience and greater responsibilities towards humanity beyond the military chain of command. General Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff acknowledged this in his Foreword to a group of papers ‘Take me to your officer’, edited Patrick Mileham, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, Shrivenham, *Occasional Paper no 54*, 2008.

An oath taken in a court of law is usually taken to test the historic and narrative truth after a specific event.

The Times 4 March 2014.

Professors Don McCuish, of the US Air Command and Staff College, and Martin Cook, of the US Naval War College, have both written on the fiduciary obligations, respectively of officers to their subordinates and the state to its armed forces.


In the USA traditionally retired officers do not critically engage in political controversy.


Annex A of the 1907 Hague Convention IV, Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land.


Unit and regimental distinctions; drills, bands and parades; messes and dinners; idiosyncrasies of dress and regimental styles; such form the richness of culture in many peoples’ eyes. Others consider military formalities and traditions as hindrances to the professional function. Who cares? Who knows? Who is right?


Some nations wish to maintain a strongly youthful spirit of risk-acceptance within their armed forces. Others require more mature and longer-serving members to meet their defence needs.

Sir John Hackett, (1970) 1986, op cit., p.120.


6 Keith Grint, ed., op.cit. p.5.
7 Northouse, Leadership, op.cit. p.35.
8 Ibid., pp.45-53. Northouse provides an excellent synthesis of the skills and competencies put forward by advocates of the skills approach.
9 Ibid., p.54.
10 Ibid., p.40.
11 Ibid., p.67.
13 Northouse, op.cit.p.67.
14 K. Grint, Leadership: A Very Short Introduction, (Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.4-14 provides a concise and thoughtful analysis of these different perceptions of what constitutes leadership.
15 Northouse, op.cit.p.69.
16 Ibid., p.1.
19 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p.43.
26 Ibid., p.76.
28 Ibid., p.226.
29 Ibid.
30 At times in the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, on the Sinai Front, the Israeli chain of command seemed on the verge of disintegration with talented ‘reservists’ such as Major-General Ariel Sharon challenging the authority of theoretically more senior, but in his opinion less competent officers. In operational terms Sharon distinguished himself during the crossing of the Suez Canal on 16th October 1973 but he had also caused controversy in the 1956 Sinai War, at Abu Aghella in 1967 and later in 1982 in Syria.

Ibid.


Northouse, Leadership, op.cit. p.128.


Ibid., p.123.


Northhouse, op.cit., p.191.


Cited in Northouse, op.cit. p.178.


K.Grint, Leadership, Oxford University Press, op.cit. pp.8-11 has a thoughtful and concise discussion on results based leadership.


Butler & McManus, Psychology, op.cit. p.138 describe conformity as ‘the process by which an individual feels pressure to change his/her opinion to conform to the majority view.’

K.Grint, Leadership, Oxford University Press, op.cit. p.103

1 From studies at RMCTC and SCHINF by L. Hardy et al, Bangor University Institute for the Psychology of Elite Performance.

2 DHALI/Blake (Directorate of Op Capability; House of Commons Defence Committee; Adult Learning Inspectorate/Nicholas Blake QC) Reports into deaths of recruits in training at Deepcut 1995-2002.
\[\text{Developed originally by James MacGregor Burns, } \textit{Leadership}, \text{ 1978, and subsequently adapted widely.}\]

\[\text{Detailed in Reference B: Courage, Discipline, Respect for Others, Integrity, Loyalty, Selfless Commitment.}\]

\[\text{Detailed in Reference B: Lawful, Appropriate, and Totally Professional.}\]

\[\text{Abridged from Lt Gen Sir Graeme Lamb.}\]

\[\text{Recruit response taken from ‘Effectiveness of instructor behaviours and their relation to leadership’ Patrick et al, 2009.}\]

\[\text{S Coleman, } \textit{Military Ethics} \text{ (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p2.}\]