



THE LAND WARFARE PAPERS

No. 81 OCTOBER 2010

Assembly Line to Custom Design: Reforming the Officer Development System

Kent W. Park

A National Security Affairs Paper
published on occasion by

**THE INSTITUTE OF
LAND WARFARE**

ASSOCIATION OF THE
UNITED STATES ARMY
Arlington, Virginia

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Reforming the Officer Development System**

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The Institute of Land Warfare
ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

AN INSTITUTE OF LAND WARFARE PAPER

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LAND WARFARE PAPER NO. 81, October 2010

Assembly Line to Custom Design: Reforming the Officer Development System

by Kent W. Park

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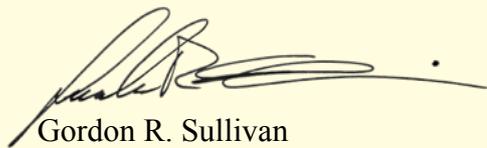
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Foreword

Most strategic documents recognize the changing nature of future national security environment. The world is rapidly transforming into a complex web of conventional and irregular threats posed by state and nonstate actors in an era of persistent conflict. In view of these challenges, many experts have recommended a whole-of-government approach to address future security threats. This approach calls for government agencies to leverage civilian expertise to provide integrated soft-power solutions to complement proven hard-power options. According to the Obama administration, combining the two into an effective strategy or smart-power will become the centerpiece of future U.S. foreign policy.

Unfortunately, the U.S. government currently lacks the capacity in our military and civilian agencies to carry out this strategy. While organizational reforms have been proposed, the author contends that they inherently miss the main point: to have a whole-of-government approach, leaders and operators must have a broad whole-of-government perspective along with the necessary training and education. This allows them to think broadly and creatively. However, the current education system for national security professionals, including the U.S. Army, does not routinely develop personnel with broad-based experience and skills. As a result, the institutional cultures do not reflect or reward these skills and attributes. While structural reforms are still necessary, they will be of limited value without giving appropriate attention to institutional culture, education and multi-faceted career management.

While continuing education for senior leaders and development of enlisted personnel are also important, this paper focuses on the development of junior officers to highlight this critical period when officers initially develop and come to terms with their professional identity. According to the author, investing in the development of junior officers is the most effective way to shape organizational culture; this bottom-up approach requires a long-term perspective, but it will create the most durable cultural change in an organization.



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October 2010

Assembly Line to Custom Design: Reforming the Officer Development System

The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind is to get an old one out.

B. H. Liddell Hart¹

The World in Transition

The Future Strategic Environment

Predicting the nature of future threats has always been a difficult and risky endeavor. This is especially true for the United States when considering its role as the preeminent arbiter of security and stability around the world. The potential cost of “getting it wrong” is extremely high. Enormous amounts of time and resources are spent looking at and analyzing future trends and potential threats to develop strategies and capabilities to ensure that the United States is ready to meet those challenges. Recently, these studies have yielded a common theme in regard to the future strategic environment. Although details and focus for each of the reports are different, there is a growing consensus that the future national security environment will be a complex web of ambiguous threats posed by state and nonstate actors in a globalized world stressed by declining natural resources and increasing effects of climate change.²

The Whole-of-Government Approach

Just as there is a common theme emerging on the nature of the future strategic environment, there is also a growing understanding of the capacity required to meet these challenges. Although it has been called by different names, the general concept is the same: “whole-of-government approach.”³

The idea calls for government agencies to leverage their civilian expertise to provide integrated *soft power* solutions to complement the availability of proven *hard power* options. The ability to combine hard and soft power into an effective strategy is called *smart power*, and according to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, it is the centerpiece of President Barack Obama’s foreign policy.⁴ Secretary Clinton stated during her confirmation hearing,

We must use what has been called smart power, the full range of tools at our disposal—diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural. . . . With smart power, diplomacy will be the vanguard of [our] foreign policy.⁵

Unfortunately, we are far from being able to implement such an approach. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen has stated, “[W]e are a good decade away from creating a capability in our other departments.”⁶ According to the strategic documents, the U.S. military cannot wait a decade for other agencies to build their capabilities. To bridge this capabilities gap, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Army in particular must act now to begin setting the foundation to build these capabilities. This will require a reassessment of the types of officers required to successfully navigate in the future strategic environment.

From Meta-competencies to Talent

There are many theories regarding traits, competencies and organizational learning, both in the private sector and within the military community. One concept—developed by Dr. Leonard Wong, Research Professor at the Army War College, and Dr. Don Snider, Emeritus Professor of Political Science at West Point—involves moving away from an industrial-age model of leader development to that of an information-age system.⁷ An industrial-age model is based on a sequential process of listing, grouping, numbering and tracking a series of skill sets that Army officers must master at certain points in their career timeline. Although this kind of system might be necessary in the initial stages of training junior officers, it quickly becomes insufficient in educating future strategic thinkers. Rather than providing an exhaustive list of knowledge, skill sets and attributes that are too numerous to be useful, the new concept proposed *meta-competencies*—identity, mental agility, cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity, world-class warrior and professional astuteness—that will help direct leader development through an adaptive educational system.⁸ While this concept of developing Army officers is an improvement over the old industrial-age model, fundamentally it is not a significant shift from the old model. We still have a set of defined competencies; they are just broader. In addition, it is debatable whether it is even necessary for the Army to develop all of its officers to have all of these meta-competencies. While this may seem to be a commendable goal, the concept falls into the familiar trap of “we have to be good at everything.”

Another more recent concept was proposed by Colonel Casey Wardynski, Major David S. Lyle and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Michael Colarusso from the Army’s Office of Economics and Manpower Analysis.⁹ They propose a whole new framework starting with development of an overall Officer Corps Strategy based on a *talent*-focused human capital model. They define talent as the intersection of three dimensions—skills, knowledge and behaviors—that create an optimal level of individual performance.¹⁰ They believe everyone has talent, and the Army must be able to access, retain, develop and employ officers based on these unique individual talents. Rather than treating

officers as interchangeable parts, this model recognizes the inherent strengths and weaknesses of all individuals; by leveraging the unique talents of individuals, organizations can create high-performing teams. It is much more realistic and cost effective to form adaptive and flexible teams by bringing together officers with complementary talents than to try to develop all officers to become flexible and adaptive “pentathletes” who can do all things well.

There are significant challenges to moving toward a talent-based officer development system. While some of these challenges are structural and bureaucratic in nature, the most significant obstacle is the organizational culture. For people who are accustomed to task, conditions and standards with clear measurements of effectiveness for specific competencies, the concept of talent will feel uncomfortable. After all, appreciating unique individual talents is a radical departure for an institution steeped in traditions of strict hierarchy and egalitarian values. Yet to remain relevant in the new strategic environment and be prepared to meet the ambiguous challenges of the future, the officer profession must be willing to question and challenge what have traditionally been sacrosanct values of the organization.

While recognizing the need for innovative and perhaps even radical new ideas in developing the theoretical framework for officer development, the focus here is on the more immediate. We need smart people and influential organizations to continue to study and debate the big picture. We must have an overall strategy; however, we also need to take some actions now. A patient suffering from a heart attack must be resuscitated before being lectured on exercising and diet. In that sense, this paper begins with some key findings about the current officer development model and offers recommendations for immediate actions that will get the Army headed in the right direction.

The paper also focuses primarily on the development of Army’s junior officers. While this is a relatively small group when compared to the entire population of officers, enlisted Soldiers and Department of Army civilians, it is arguably the most influential when considering long-term impact on the organizational culture. In addition, it is the population that is currently in most need of change to their development system.

The Current System

The current system of Army officer development is reminiscent of an assembly line where interchangeable parts are added in a sequential manner to rapidly create large quantities of the same product. This method for producing Army officers was developed, practiced and perfected during the industrial age when the concept was probably appropriate if not necessary for the threat environment. Threats have evolved dramatically since that time, and although the Army has adapted to the new threats through the introduction of new (and in some cases the reintroduction of old) tactics, techniques and procedures, the officer development process has not kept pace. Just as doctrine evolves with time, officer development must also adapt by creating a more versatile and balanced officer development system.

There are two sides of the military profession, the *art* and the *science*. Outstanding military leaders can create a balanced developmental strategy that taps into both domains. The *science* of the military profession refers to specific skills or tactics, techniques and procedures that are developed mostly through training. The *art* of the military profession refers to general knowledge and diverse perspectives that are learned through education. Both are necessary for strategic leaders. During the industrial age, the officer development model heavily favored science with its sequential method for producing officers, resulting in what is clearly the best-trained army in the world. The challenge today is to ensure that the U.S. Army is also the best-educated army in the world.

Recommendations for the U.S. Army

Overview

Within the officer development model of the U.S. Army there are several suboptimal practices that, if corrected, could play a significant role in developing and retaining more talented officers. Below is a list of the findings (details of each are discussed in following sections):

- **Tendency to blur the difference between *training* and *education*.** Result: The Army's officer development process is out of balance and unable to regularly produce well-rounded officers.
- **Lack of attention to talent management.** Result: The Army inadvertently pushes out innovative officers with diverse backgrounds and specialized expertise while they are simultaneously pulled by the private sector.
- **Failure to recognize the widening generational gap between junior and senior leaders.** Result: The officer development strategy is inefficient at tapping into the existing pool of human capital in the junior and mid-level ranks.
- **Lack of unity of command and/or effort in managing officer development.** Result: Decentralized authority and responsibilities create confusion and unnecessary competition within the officer management system.
- **Too short and too rigid officer career timeline.** Result: The timeline inadvertently but routinely penalizes officers who seek broadening experiences while simultaneously reinforcing the "check the block" mentality.

To address these issues, the following changes to officer training, education and the career management system are recommended (details of each are discussed in following sections):

- **Create an officer development system.** Currently, officers must adapt their development needs to fit within a restrictive timeline. Instead of having officers adapt to the model, create a *system* that adapts to the developmental needs of individual officers.

- **Redefine the two terms *training* and *education*.** Clearly articulate two strategies for advancing each domain within the officer development system.
- **Establish unity of command and effort in officer development.** There should be one office responsible for the entire life cycle of an officer from recruitment to retirement.

It is easy to dismiss the idea of expansive personnel reform as too difficult or unrealistic given all the pressures from current constraints. The Army is still involved in Iraq and Afghanistan. The domestic economy is far from recovering. Admiral Mullen, referring to the rapidly increasing national debt threatening to crowd out resources for the military, has stated, “The most significant threat to our national security is our [national] debt.”¹¹ In the face of declining resources for the military, it might be tempting to push off investing in the development of future Army officers to solve the current crisis. The cost of taking such a short-term view is that we will continue to perpetuate the conditions requiring crisis management far into the future.

Details of Key Findings and Issues

Training vs. Education. The Army has a tendency to blur the difference between training and education. In too many of the Army’s schools and in its doctrine, these two terms are used interchangeably.¹² In a white paper called *Adapt or Die*, Brigadier General David A. Fastabend and Robert H. Simpson point out:

Most Army schools open with the standard bromide: “*We are not going to teach you what to think . . . we are going to teach you how to think.*” They rarely do. (emphasis added)¹³

That statement captures the root of the tension between training and education. The Army has to rethink its approach on how it trains vs. how it educates its officers and develop clear strategies to attain both. All indications are that the Army excels at training; however, it is grossly deficient in education. One positive trend is noticeable in the most recent release of Army Field Manual (FM) 7-0, *Training for Full-Spectrum Operations*. This document, unlike its predecessor, clearly defines the difference between training and education. It states that good training can result in instinctive reactions or battle drills to external factors.¹⁴ Education, in contrast, provides intellectual constructs and principles:¹⁵

It [education] allows individuals to apply trained skills beyond a standard situation to gain a desired result. It helps develop individuals and leaders who can think, apply knowledge, and solve problems under uncertain or ambiguous conditions.¹⁶

Over the past several decades, the value of education has declined while preference for training and operational experience has grown. One explanation is that most officers never left the tactical level of war. It is not until an officer operates at the operational and strategic levels of war that military art surpasses the science. The challenge today is that art is increasing in importance at the lower end of the spectrum as the battlefield

becomes more complex and ambiguous. One is not necessarily better than the other. What the Army needs is a balance of the two.

Talent Management. Lack of attention to talent management is costing the Army some of its best and brightest officers. As mentioned in the introduction, the current personnel system is somewhat like an assembly line. Officers stay on the same conveyor belt as they receive “just in time” training before they proceed to the next level of responsibility. By using a system that caters to the lowest common denominator, the Army is failing to recognize and develop its outstanding talents. Kevin D. Stringer, in *The War on Terror and the War for Officer Talent*, makes a case for adopting what other large, successful organizations have been using for years:

Talent management . . . is the strategic management of the flow of talent through an organization. Its purpose is to assure that the supply of talent is available to align the right people with the right jobs at the right time based on strategic business objectives. It is a mindset that goes beyond the rhetoric toward a holistic and integrated approach to leveraging the greatest competitive advantage from people. It also refers to those *special strategies an organization deploys to recruit, retain and develop its pool of top talent.* (emphasis added)¹⁷

Unfortunately, this is not the way the Army regularly views its officers. The current system is driven by the operational need to fill slots with bodies. Although officer development is sometimes taken into consideration, it is among the first criteria to drop off when the system comes under pressure.¹⁸ The Army’s answer to the officer retention problem was to create the Officer Retention Branch. Instead, it should have created the Talent Management Branch to solve retention issues and keep the most highly qualified and talented individuals in service.

Talent management is not just another human resource process. It is a holistic mindset that integrates all of the factors involved in recruitment and retention. This includes mentorship—another area in which the Army has fallen short. Lieutenant General (Retired) Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., who has made a distinguished lifelong study of leadership in the military, academics and the corporate world, states,

The practice of mentoring in the military is restricted to the annual Officer Evaluation Report, which is insufficient. Organizational best practices in the area of developmental feedback and monitoring have left the military behind.¹⁹

To further compound the problem, there is a domino effect when a talented individual is lost. In addition to generating innovative ideas, these officers play an important role in keeping other innovative officers—peers and subordinates—in the Army. A loss of one talented and innovative officer is not an isolated event; it establishes and/or reinforces a pattern. It sends signals to others about how they are valued and what traits are important to the organization. As social scientists have long recognized, simple interactions between individuals can add up to complex self-organized social behavior.²⁰ A loss of one talented officer may have a far more detrimental effect on the

Army's desire to transform into a more innovative and adaptive organization than one may believe.

Generational Gap. Failure to recognize and understand the widening generational gap between junior and older-generation officers is causing discontent, mistrust and resentment within the younger cohort of Army officers. Some studies suggest that many junior and mid-level officers, especially those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, are particularly dissatisfied with the Army's leadership.²¹ Experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, though, merely magnifies the tension; it is not the root cause. The root cause is the generational gap.

At any point in time, there are usually three or four identifiable generations serving in the Army. As they cycle through their careers, conflicts can arise as different generations jockey for power and relevance. These types of generational power shifts have occurred numerous times over the years, and they usually result in some form of tension. The current generational shift, however, is causing a bigger rift within the Army than has occurred in the past or in the other services.²²

While the changing of the guard between generations is unavoidable, the high level of tension is not inevitable. In "Generational Change: Implications for the Development of Future Military Leaders," Paul Whelan details some of the challenges of bringing in the newest generation, the "Millennials," into military service.²³ He also highlights the enormous potential the Millennials possess for shaping and leading the future Army.²⁴ His observations are consistent with many other leading literatures on the Millennials and their immense positive potential if strategically harnessed.²⁵ Although the details on the characteristics of the Millennials are outside the scope of this study, one aspect is especially relevant to the current Army. Whelan states, "The idea of a lifelong career in one company, quite common in the past, seems increasingly remote today."²⁶ The new generation of workers views their employment as a means for developing new talents. It is a mere stepping stone to a higher level of self-development. If the current organization no longer provides a path for continued growth, this new crop of workers has no qualms about moving on to the next organization. This may seem troubling to the older generation of Army officers with a particular view on loyalty to the profession and a purist ideas of what it means to receive a *commission* from our society. However, it would be a mistake to make a normative judgment on the motivations of younger officers. Most studies conducted on the emerging generation of young Americans indicate that they are just as dedicated to the ideas and values of *service* that have always motivated young men and women to wear the uniform.²⁷ However, the difference now is that the younger generation sees military service as just one of many different paths to serving our nation. When considering the diverse threats to our country, this broader interpretation of service may in fact be what is needed to ensure its security.

Acknowledging the generational differences is the first step. The next step is to develop the appropriate strategies to recruit, retain, train and educate the current generation of junior and mid-level officers. Although we should not exaggerate the severity

of this problem, we should recognize that the Army is not maximizing the true potential of existing human capital.

Unity of Command. Currently, there are three different departments, each with two sub-offices, that manage officer development:

- Human Resource Command (HRC):
 - Leader Development Division (LDD);
 - Officer Personnel Management Division (OPMD);
- G-3/5/7 (Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations and Plans):
 - Strategic Leadership Division (SSF);
 - Training and Readiness Directorate (TR);
- Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC):
 - Army Leader Development Office (ALDO);
 - Combined Arms Center Leader Development and Education (CAC-LD&E).

Each office has a specific interest within the officer development cycle, but no one is looking at the whole development system itself.²⁸ Part of the problem stems from the migration of responsibility for officer development from one department to another over the years.²⁹ Every time the responsibility is transferred, residual functions are left behind. In 2007, the Chief of Staff of the Army named the TRADOC commander as the single responsible official for all Army leader development initiatives across all cohorts, domains and components of the Army.³⁰ The result was the creation of the Army Leader Development Office to manage the Army Leader Development Program. In just over a year, this office made significant progress in bringing together and pushing forward existing leader development initiatives that were languishing in various stages of implementation. However, without consolidating the authority scattered in different departments, ALDO will quickly run into roadblocks. In addition, this office is not properly resourced to take on the responsibility of owning the entire officer development system. They can currently manage existing initiatives, but they have no way of tracking post-implementation effects and conducting the level of research and analysis required to anticipate future trends and needs.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) study in January 2007 evaluating Army's officer accession and retention initiatives pointed out that "the Army does not have an integrated strategic plan to address its retention shortfalls."³¹ In regard to officer accession, the report stated:

The Army's three accession programs are decentralized and do not formally coordinate with one another, making it difficult for the Army, using its traditional approach, to effectively manage risks and allocate resources across programs in an integrated, strategic fashion. Without a strategic, integrated plan for determining overall annual accession goals, managing risks, and allocating

resources, the Army's ability to meet its future mission requirements and to transform to more deployable, modular units is uncertain.³²

If the GAO were to conduct a study on the officer development system as it did with the accession and retention programs, it would come to a similar conclusion.

Time and resources allocated to officer development are adequate. In totality, the Army spends a great deal of time and resources trying to develop the right types of officers. The problem is that the time and resources are scattered throughout several different departments that see officer development through their own limited lenses. If we use academia as an example, it is like having strong Math, History and English departments but no program director to provide any guidance on the overall educational end state for a student. The different department heads are all competing to establish what they believe is the right balance—which is almost always biased toward their own academic interests. In the same fashion, the officer education and management system has strong sub-factions made up of different branches and functional areas but with no single office in charge of the overall development process.

Officer Career Timeline. Army officers are more than capable of preparing for full-spectrum operations; however, they need more time.³³ The current timeline—a product of the industrial age—is based on a sequential model of mass-producing officers who are capable of meeting the challenges presented by well-defined conventional threats. This system lacks the flexibility to produce adaptive officers who can operate effectively in the information age against undefined, ambiguous threats. Even more troubling, the current system is actually counterproductive in that it is pushing out some of the Army's more innovative leaders who have broad experiences necessary to succeed in irregular warfare.

Taking time off from the operational timeline to broaden one's experience through graduate schools, fellowships or other internships is often viewed as a distraction and a potential risk to an officer's career. It takes an incredible amount of good luck and timing to ensure that an officer can temporarily jump off of the "conveyor belt" for any significant time for self-development. Among officers who do not have the right timing, the fortunate ones will have senior ranking officers to informally put them back on track. The unfortunate ones will have to pay the price of a rigid officer timeline that reinforces a "check the block" mentality. The current system will *push* these officers out while they are simultaneously *pulled* by the private sector that values their education and experience. This system of relying on luck and accidental timing is no way for a profession to develop its future strategic leaders.

Over the years, the Army has made some progress. The Officer Professional Management System (OPMS) has gone through several iterations of reforms, and the overall progress has been positive.³⁴ However, the problem with the timeline has not gone away. The current model does not give officers enough time to train for conventional warfare while also preparing for contingency operations. The fundamental problem is

that the operational timeline is in competition with the training and education timeline. As long as the two are competing instead of complementing, the Army will continue to have problems developing strategic and adaptive leaders. Many officers who would benefit from taking an operational pause for broadening experiences will opt out in fear of getting off track. Many officers who do choose to broaden their experience will put themselves at career risk.

Some in the Army may argue that officers in functional areas provide an adequate balance of nontraditional military knowledge for the profession. Although functional-area officers are important for the whole-of-government approach, they serve a different purpose. With few exceptions, these officers provide specialized knowledge on specific subjects.³⁵ The Army needs more officers who can go *deep* in military tactics but also *wide* in nonmilitary tasks—commanders and key staff officers who have advanced *general knowledge* on a multitude of different subjects from humanitarian assistance to governance.

Recommendations

Create an Officer Development System. The Army must examine the current officer development model and analyze its strengths and weaknesses given what is known about the future security environment. Army Field Manual 6-22, *Army Leadership*, released in October 2006, offers a good conceptual framework for leader development.³⁶ It incorporates principles of broadening experiences that are often cited as critical for future leaders. However, it lacks practical solutions for how a leader can attain these experiences. For example, chapter 8-33 emphasizes the importance of developing broadening skills and recommends

taking the time to learn languages, customs, belief systems, motivational factors, operational principles, and the doctrine of multinational partners and those of potential adversaries. Leaders can gain additional language skills and geopolitical awareness by seeking language schooling and assignments in specific regions of interest.³⁷

In chapter 8-36, the manual further states:

To prepare for future responsibilities, Army leaders should explore off-duty education, such as available college courses that teach additional skills and broaden perspectives on life, as well as distributed learning courses on management principles or specific leadership topics.³⁸

While I agree in principle and endorse the leadership model offered by FM 6-22, the reality on the ground (career timeline, demands from operational assignments, stress on family) does not support developing these competencies *on the side* as FM 6-22 seems to indicate. FM 7-0, *Training for Full-Spectrum Operations*, does not offer any better or more practical solutions.

A new officer development system needs to go beyond providing goals that are unrealistic and offer practical means—a “roadmap”—for getting there. To this end, I

recommend that the Army evaluate the officer development process holistically, taking into consideration the whole life cycle of an Army officer, including recruitment, retention, training, education, operational assignments and retirement. A general rule of thumb in this process should be flexibility. As a start, the Army needs to decouple the operational timeline from the training and education timeline, giving officers two “clocks”—one for operational assignments and one for training and education assignments. During any type of training and education period, the operations timeline should be paused and vice versa during operational assignments.³⁹ As long as these two types of assignments are in competition and command and promotions favor operational assignments, training and education of officers will almost always lose out.

It is not necessary or even desirable to give any special advantages to officers with advanced civil schooling or other broadening experiences. It is enough simply to stop discouraging officers from pursuing broadening experiences. The benefits from their broadening experiences should appear as value added in their operational performance.

Redefine Training and Education. Within the new officer development system, the Army must articulate two clear strategies—one for training and one for education. The recent update of FM 7-0 serves as a good starting point; the next update, however, should separate training and education and include education under the self-development domain.

Redefining training vs. education goes beyond mere updates to Army doctrine. A cultural change must take place wherein education in its correct definition is valued in all aspects of officer development. This includes evaluating the quality of the education. An officer who spends two years immersed in graduate studies at a top-tier civilian university will have an experience distinctly different from that of one who receives an online degree in eight months. Even with officers attending the same educational institution, one who takes the minimum required courses in just security issues will have an experience different from that of someone stretching the limits of his or her comfort zone by participating in nonsecurity-related classes and events. The Army needs to value *education* and not just an advanced degree. To this end, recent increases in graduate school opportunities are welcomed but incomplete as a tool to better educate Army officers. The educational *experience* is what really counts. Showing that the vast majority of field grade officers have advanced degrees is meaningless without qualitative measurements of their effectiveness.

Establish Unity of Command and Effort. The Army needs to establish one office responsible for the entire officer development system. This office should have the responsibility to:

- develop and maintain an officer talent management strategy;
- assess the changing nature of the strategic environment and proactively develop officers to meet future challenges;
- manage and periodically update the officer career timeline;

- coordinate the officer training program with other military schools;
- manage the officer education program by creating opportunities for broadening experiences and managing all advanced civil schooling, fellowships and internships; and
- provide input for promotion boards and command selection boards.

Although not specifically discussed, this office should also take control of the officer evaluation report system.

I recommend that this office come under TRADOC. The existing ALDO is a good foundation from which to expand this capacity; its role in organizing the Quarterly Leader Development Review (QLDR), which serves as a decision forum for senior Army leaders in issues related to leadership, places it in an ideal position for influence. ALDO's visibility on all Army leader initiatives gives it the broad perspective necessary to think strategically about officer development.

To make this work, the Army needs to change the trend of undermanning TRADOC to fulfill operational requirements. Some undermanning is understandable, especially during wartime, but a 21.4 percent shortage (1,281 officers) for TRADOC and a 54 percent shortage (247 officers) for the Combined Arms Center (CAC) is excessive.⁴⁰ One way to compensate for some of the shortages and to send the right signal regarding the importance of training and educating future Army leaders is to individually select, by name, some of the best-performing commanders at every level of the Army for assignments at TRADOC/CAC, and then return them to operational assignments without allowing the bureaucratic system to penalize them. The Army must break the perception of TRADOC assignments as "retired on active duty" or as a "graveyard for colonels."

The Army must also consolidate authority and resources currently scattered in several different departments. In particular, the Army needs to transfer the authority and expertise related to the officer development system currently at HRC (OPMD and LLD) as well as G-3/5/7 (SSF and TR) to TRADOC (ALDO). I recommend establishing a task force of experts in this field who can work closely with the Army Enterprise Task Force, which is implementing a larger consolidation and streamlining of personnel functions. I do not recommend a complete transfer of these separate offices; they have specialized knowledge and functions outside the scope of the officer development system and serve an important role in their parent departments. My recommendation is for selective transfer of specific functions related to the overall officer development system.

One other clarification is to delineate the difference between management and coordination of the officer development system and development of new talents. This proposal is to consolidate the former—the management and coordination of the overall system. Specialized knowledge or talents that exist for different missions should remain decentralized. For example, we should encourage initiatives such as

the recent creation of the Directorate for Complex Operation within the Combined Arms Center. Innovating and developing new talents require decentralized freedom, but leveraging these varied talents for officer development requires centralized management and coordination.

The Road Ahead – A Work in Progress

Overall, the Army has invested quite a bit of time and resources into studying these issues. In particular, these findings and recommendations echo some that have already been expressed by Lieutenant General (Retired) William Reno in his report titled, “Resolution of Officer Issues in the United States Army.” They also address some of the key issues identified in the Officer Leader Development and Education Survey conducted by the Center for Army Leadership (Technical Report 2008-1) on 7 May 2008.⁴¹ I was also encouraged by the separate works of the OPMS Task Force, TRADOC (ALDO) and G-3/5/7. Their proposed initiatives such as modular education, educational reset and interagency internships seem very promising.

The most promising and arguably one of the most important works on officer development in recent years, however, was conducted by the Office of Economics and Manpower Analysis at West Point. Their six-volume monograph series, published by the Strategic Studies Institute, is one of the most complete and academically rigorous studies conducted on this important topic.⁴² Release of their papers paralleled a nine-month virtual conference, hosted by Vice Chief of Staff of the Army General Peter Chiarelli, that resulted in 29,148 visits, 185,043 page views and 876 posts from officers of every rank and specialty.⁴³ It was the first of its kind and the largest collaborative effort made by the Officer Corps to discuss the future of the profession. All of this effort was capped by Senior Conference XLVII (6–8 June 2010 at the United States Military Academy), where the Army’s key leaders in the human capital domain spent three days reviewing, discussing and charting a new path toward an Officer Corps strategy. It remains to be seen whether sustentative changes will occur in the near future.

Conclusion

The overall effect of the problems identified here is that the Army currently has many officers, primarily in the junior and mid-career ranks, who are confused about what *right* looks like in regard to professional development. Many are confused by the conflicting signals they are receiving from the Army’s leadership, from Human Resource Command and from their own experiences in combat. This confusion leads to unrealistic career expectations, competition between personal and professional goals and a general uncertainty about their willingness for continued military service. These issues, along with shortsighted remedies focused on financial incentives, will eventually degrade the professionalism of the Officer Corps. It is possible to reverse this trend, but the Army’s leadership must act soon. Too many talented individuals with valuable experiences from the field are leaving the service every day.

Endnotes

- ¹ B. H. Liddell Hart, *Thoughts on War* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1944).
- ² Compilation of themes from:
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 - United States Joint Forces Command, *2008 Joint Operating Environment* (Norfolk, Va.: United States Joint Forces Command, November 2008), <http://www.jfcom.mil/newslink/storyarchive/2008/JOE2008.pdf>;
 - Andrew Krepinevich, Robert Martinage and Robert Work, *The Challenges to US National Security: Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2008), http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20080821.The_Challenges_to_/R.20080821.The_Challenges_to_.pdf;
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- ³ Compilation of themes from:
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- ⁴ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs™, 2004).
- ⁵ Hillary Rodham Clinton, Confirmation Hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 13 January 2009.
- ⁶ Jim Garamone, "Mullen Addresses Need for 'Whole Government' Approach," *American Forces Press Service*, 6 February 2009, <http://www.defenselink.mil/News/newsarticle.aspx?id=52978>.

- ⁷ For a detailed explanation and a cogent argument for shifting the framework, see Leonard Wong and Don M. Snider, “Strategic Leadership of the Army Profession,” *The Future of the Army Profession*, Don M. Snider and Lloyd J. Matthews, eds., second edition (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005), chapter 28.
- ⁸ Meta-competencies defined by Wong and Snider: *Identity* – ability to gather self-feedback, to form accurate self-perceptions, and to change one’s self-concept as appropriate; *Mental Agility* – ability to recognize changes in the environment; to determine what is new, what must be learned to be effective, and the learning process that follows that determination; *Cross-Cultural Savvy* – ability to understand cultures beyond one’s organizational, economic, religious, societal, geographical and political boundaries; *Interpersonal Maturity* – ability to empower subordinates, peers and constituents; persuade, negotiate and build consensus; analyze, challenge and change an organization’s culture to align it with the ever-changing outside environment; *World-Class Warrior* – ability to move beyond tactical and operational competence and understand the entire spectrum of operations at the strategic and theater levels; operate effectively in joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environment harnessing all elements of national power; *Professional Astuteness* – ability to develop the future leaders of the profession; have the insight and drive to do what is best for the profession and the nation; politically savvy, knowing when to compromise and understanding the many constituencies that the profession serves
- ⁹ Casey Wardynski, David S. Lyle and Michael J. Colarusso, *Officer Corps Strategy for Success* (six-monograph series), Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College:
“Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Employing Talent,” May 2010, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=988>;
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- ¹⁰ Wardynski, Lyle and Colarusso, “Talent: Implications for a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy,” p. 5.
- ¹¹ Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, in remarks to the Detroit Economic Club Luncheon, 26 August 2010, <http://www.jcs.mil/speech.aspx?ID=1445>.
- ¹² Department of the Army (DA) Pamphlet 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, chapter 4: Officer Education, Draft, 11 December 2007, http://www.airdefenseartillery.com/ada_website_08/attach/p600_3.pdf. Lack of distinction between education and training is evident throughout the document; however, it is clearly illustrated in chapter 4.
- ¹³ David A. Fastabend and Robert H. Simpson, “Adapt or Die: The Imperative for a Culture of Innovation in the U.S. Army,” *ARMY*, February 2004, p. 15.
- ¹⁴ Department of the Army, Army Field Manual 7-0, *Training for Full-Spectrum Operations*, December 2008, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/Repository/FM70/FM7-0.pdf>.

- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Kevin D. Stringer, “The War on Terror and the War for Officer Talent: Linked Challenges for the U.S. Army,” *The Land Warfare Papers*, No. 67, July 2008, The Institute of Land Warfare, Association of the United States Army, p. 3, <http://www.ausa.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/ILW%20Web-ExclusivePubs/Land%20Warfare%20Papers/LWP67.pdf>.
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- 24 Whelan, “Generational Change,” p. 271.
- 25 Claire Raines, “Generations at Work: Managing Millennials,” 2002, <http://www.hreonline.com/pdfs/ManagingMillennials.pdf>.
- 26 Whelan, “Generational Change,” p. 272.
- 27 Raines, “Generations at Work.”
- 28 The exception is the Chief of Staff of the Army (depending on the priorities, personality and management style of the serving Chief). There is no single institutionalized office or department that looks at the overall officer development.
- 29 Phone interview with Colonel Daniel Shanahan, Director, Army Leader Development Office, TRADOC, 21 October 2008; and phone interview with Mr. Jack Kendall, Director, Leader Development Division, HRC, 21 October 2008.
- 30 Information Paper (081103), subj: Army Leader Development Program (ALDP), dated 11 November 2008, signed by Mr. Steven Hoffpauer (ATCS-LDO) and approved by Colonel Daniel Shanahan, available on AKO, <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/517997>.
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- ³⁴ Officer Personnel Management System Task Force, Pre-Command Course Brief, 9 May 2008; requires AKO access.
- ³⁵ There are some exceptions, e.g., Strategists (Functional Area 59, <http://www.fa-59.army.pentagon.mil/Education.htm>) and, to a certain degree, Foreign Area Officers (Functional Area 48, <http://dop.rta.mi.th/Career%20management/Chapter46.htm>), who receive broad-based education.
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- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, chapter 8-33.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, chapter 8-36.
- ³⁹ The idea of decoupling the operational clock from the education clock came from a discussion with Colonel Tom Kolditz, Professor and Head of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the United States Military Academy at West Point, 19 December 2008.
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