

# A Military Service Perspective Regarding the Integration of Character and Leadership

Douglas R. Lindsay, Lt Col, USAF, PhD  
Joseph E. Sanders, Col, USAF, PhD

The Profession of Arms is in the midst of an extraordinary transformation. Historically, military might was proven by massing armies against each other and combating until the dominance of one side was established. Modern warfare and military operations reveal a much different type of battlefield. The terminology that once defined our workspace in the military such as battlefield, standing armies, and economies of scale has been supplanted by terms like coalition forces, peace-keeping operations, and information operations. This changing context has imperative implications regarding the training of future military forces. One of these specific implications involves the decision-making process at the individual and tactical level. Decisions that were once made at senior levels are now dispersed

throughout the military hierarchy. Accordingly, all military members on the “battlefield” of today must be prepared to make decisions that influence not only the success of the immediate mission, but also the completion of the overall theater mission. For example, a young sergeant that is leading a squad through a village in Afghanistan can no longer assume that the impact of his or her actions are limited to that geographical location. Poor decisions, such as those that lead to civilian casualties, could destabilize military-civilian relations locally and diplomatic relations internationally. Thus, even when operating at a tactical level, improperly executed decision making can destabilize the broad military mission (Sanders, Lindsay, Foster, & Cook, in press).

Lt Col Douglas R. Lindsay, PhD, is a 1992 United States Air Force Academy graduate and currently an associate professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at USAFA. He has served in numerous positions such as flight commander, inspector general, research psychologist, assistant professor and executive officer. He is currently actively involved in research with over 30 publications and presentations and serves as the Deputy Department Head for Research. His areas of specialization are in leadership education and development, leader-member exchange, and time orientation effects on individuals and organizations.

Colonel Joseph E. Sanders, PhD, is the Permanent Professor and Director, Center for Character & Leadership Development, United States Air Force Academy. The Center is responsible for providing leadership, honor, and character education to the Cadet Wing. The Center is central to supporting the Academy’s mission of graduating officers of character, and integrating the Air Force’s Core Values. Colonel Sanders has served as a Missile Combat Crew Commander, Peacekeeper ICBM Instructor, and Assistant Chief, Simulated Courseware Development.

The unprecedented importance of tactical-level decision making necessitates that our forces behave consistently with the rules of engagement associated with the area of operations, but also by certain ethical and moral principles – principles that take into account the culture of the country in which they are operating. Therefore, old models of simply training a set of leader skills and competencies are useful (and necessary), but no longer sufficient. Rather, service members must recognize that the situational flux has accelerated to a point that leader strategies that work one day might not work the following day. Taken further, leaders cannot be guided solely by cognitive knowledge, but also by a broader set of fundamental principles related to their sense of self and being. Service members with the right state of *being* create a capacity for growth and application versus a set of competencies that might fail as the situation changes around them. Specifically, this involves being, feeling, thinking, and behaving ethically and effectively even when encountering novel and often critical situations (as is common to the military profession). To the point, force development must focus on its service member's fundamental character. As militaries advance into the 21st Century, their educational institutions must become increasingly concerned about how to develop members' character and leadership performance capacities.

It is to this point that the current issue of JCLI is aimed. Specifically, with the changing nature of the profession of arms to accommodate current military operations, what are the subsequent implications for developing leaders of character? This issue will address this question by examining it from many different points of view. The journal starts with an interview from Lt Gen Michael Gould, Superintendent of Cadets at the United States Air

Force Academy (USAFA). He discusses the changes in military training for the current generation of cadets and how to prepare them for the new age of warfare they will face.

Following the opening interview, several of the service academies have written articles explaining their approach to character education and leadership training. The first article is from the United States Military Academy (USMA) written by Lt Col Michael Turner, Maj Chad DeBos and Lt Col (Ret) Francis Licameli. They focus on the moral development of future military leaders and compare their education with current college level programs. West Point has a Cadet Leader Development System to ensure that officers receive education to make the right decision when faced with moral dilemmas. Next, Capt Reed Bonadonna at the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) discusses the history and significance of the honor code. He reasons that the code should be taught across the academy in historical and ethical depth for it develops habits of trust and accountability. Honor is inherited from the past and must survive in contemporary culture with enduring characteristics. The journal continues with an article from USAFA written by Dr. Jeff Jackson, Lt Col Doug Lindsay and Maj Shane Coyne. USAFA makes an effort across all mission elements to address the institutional outcomes with requirements of character and leadership competencies. They promote growth in these areas with academics and experiential programs. The goal is to produce competent leaders whose actions are informed and guided by character. Then, Capt Mark Adamshick at the United States Naval Academy (USNA) explains the growth of their character programs since it began in 2005. He discusses how midshipmen are taught three pillars

of moral, mental and physical development. Honor and character are important training for exceptional leaders.

The service academy perspective is concluded with an article from Steve Shambach and Dr. Jeff Jackson at USAFA, who discuss the development of the Service Academy Consortium on Character Assessment (SACCA). This collaboration amongst the five service academies strives to improve character assessment resources, and shares information and initiatives which make training more efficient and effective. The common mission of the SACCA is to produce leaders of character and this provides a forum for resources and research.

After the articles from the various service academies, there is a personal reflection on character and leadership training by USAFA Cadet

Josh Matthews. He discusses leadership goals and core values from the cadet perspective. This is followed with a narrative from CMSgt Salzman, Command Chief Master Sergeant, USAFA, on the development of leadership. He expresses the importance for the cadets to practice leadership skills and learn from their mistakes while in training. Then the journal concludes with an interview with Dr. Ervin Rokke, current president of the USAFA Endowment and 1962 USAFA graduate. He describes the changing nature of the 21st century profession of arms; attributes that he sees as imperative to future officers, and the best ways to train, educate and develop cadets with respect to character and leadership.