

Lack of Emotional Intelligence as a Factor in the Relief of US Army Commanders

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Lack of Emotional Intelligence as a Factor in the Relief of US Army Commanders. MAJ Dan Stuewe, US Army, 46 pages.

US Army leaders require more than tactical and operational leadership competency to achieve mission success in combat operations. Further, skill on the battlefield can be overshadowed by consequences from unintended actions. Throughout military history, some seasoned combat leaders in command of American troops in combat have made irreconcilable mistakes along the way that did not directly relate to combat actions. Despite honorable intentions in some cases, many of these leaders' careers ended with their removal from command. Current US Army leadership doctrine describes the expectations and desired capabilities of its leaders, but too often senior leaders get it wrong. This happens, in part, because the lens used to assess leaders neglects key factors including Emotional intelligence—a psychological approach that broadens the leadership assessment lens while providing an improved framework to develop today's combat leaders as they adapt to an increasingly complex operating environment.

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Acronyms

| | |
|--------|--------------------------------------|
| ADP | Army Doctrine Publication |
| ADRP | Army Doctrine Reference Publication |
| CINCFE | Commander in Chief, Far East Command |
| CINCUN | Commander in Chief, United Nations |
| IQ | Intelligence Quotient |
| EI | Emotional Intelligence |
| NKPA | North Korea People's Army |
| OPCON | Operational Control |
| OER | Officer Evaluation Report |
| PLA | People's Liberation Army |
| SOP | Standard Operating Procedure |
| TACON | Tactical Control |
| TF | Task Force |

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Introduction

We should take care not to make the intellect our god. It has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality. It cannot lead, it can only serve.

— Albert Einstein, *Out of My Later Years*

A few months ago, a seasoned US Army major eagerly opened his email in anticipation of reading the recently released lieutenant colonel promotion list; he was pleased to see his name on the list. A few months later, his name also appears on the command selection list, assigning him to a battalion command within the storied US Army division where he started his career. The major could not have been happier. However, just hours after seeing his name on the command list, one of his greatest mentors, a very senior officer in the US Army, called him on the telephone. Expecting to hear congratulatory comments, the major found himself speechless when his mentor candidly explained that, as a soon-to-be tactical battalion commander, he would have to immediately become more self-aware and learn how to manage his emotions; if he failed to do so, the major's mentor predicted that he would find himself relieved of command within a year of taking command.

Emotional Intelligence

The self-awareness and management of emotions that the senior officer had referred to are known in the field of psychology as emotional intelligence (EI). Although definitions vary in the current literature, psychologists generally describe EI as one's ability to manage one's own emotions and understand the emotions of other people. This concept originated in 1990 with an article published in *The American Psychological Association*, written by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer. The concept started gaining widespread popularity in 1995 upon the publication of Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence*.¹

¹ Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2016), 27-28; John D. Mayer, Peter Salovey, David R. Caruso, and Gil Sitarenios, "Emotional Intelligence as a Standard Intelligence," *The American Psychological Association* 1, no. 3 (2001): 232-33; Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 10th Anniversary Edition (New York: Bantam Dell, 2005), ix-xv.

Some of Goleman's peers have criticized him for receiving all the praise and popularity surrounding the concept of EI even though he did not first use the term EI. While Goleman did not invent EI, he packaged it and presented it in such a way that his works have led to significant progress in the study and understanding of the topic. Goleman's first publication focused on children, but it gained so much interest in the executive business field that Goleman continued to evolve the concept with other psychologists, resulting in the publication of more books and articles. Goleman has argued that EI, rather than the intelligence quotient (IQ), accounts for more of the variances in leader effectiveness. In other words, a leader could be the smartest human being on the planet, but if that person lacks a strong level of EI, then that leader could very likely prove unsuccessful and cause damage to the organization.²

The importance of EI with regards to leadership appears rather simple to understand just by looking at the two words that make up the term; emotions reveal how oneself and others are feeling and intelligence is the cognitive ability to understand what that piece of information means and apply to the task at hand. An organization full of individuals that feel unmotivated or uninterested is bound to perform poorly. Furthermore, subordinates are also unlikely to tell their superior exactly how they feel. Hence, a leader who possesses a high level of emotional intelligence is much more likely to lead effectively.³

In addition to understanding the group's emotions, the leader must also possess emotional self-awareness and self-control to avoid negative impacts on the entire organization. Everyone in the team watches the boss, and a boss that lacks self-control sets a poor tone, risks making emotionally-fueled decisions, and drives the negative emotions into the subordinates. Goleman describes this negative effect as creating *dissonance* within the group, resulting in underachieving

² Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, 5th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Brand, 2013) 170-72; Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, xi; David S. Abrhams, "Emotional Intelligence and Army Leadership: GIVE IT TO ME STRAIGHT!," *Military Review* 87, no. 2 (March 2007): 86.

³ Northouse, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, 27-28.

performance. Conversely, leaders who understand their emotions and can effectively control them, while also driving the positive emotions of the team, create resonance, bringing out the best characteristics of the subordinates.⁴

While EI continues to gain attention in the civilian workplace, it has met resistance in the US Army. Within the army leadership lexicon, there is minimal acceptance of the word *emotions* and the concept of emotional intelligence. The two main reasons for this resistance are the nature of the US Army's mission and EI's subjectivity.

The US Army's mission is to fight and win the nation's wars as part of the joint force. When it comes to leading an organization to win battles within a war, understanding emotions is not something that commonly shows up at the top of the list of requirements. This resistance is most likely the result of the secondary institutionalization of US Army officers as they progress through their careers. Throughout their training and education, commissioned or non-commissioned officers learn how to lead troops in arduous conditions, learning or experiencing resilience in their everyday lives. This training does not, however, focus on understanding and controlling individual and group emotions. The US Army must breed cohorts of aggressive leaders that can fight and lead in the challenging conditions of combat operations, but it does not recognize the role of EI in this leadership style.⁵

Goleman described six leadership styles to show that EI alone does not make a leader, but the coordinated activities and characteristics of a leader, combined with EI, create the full range of skills, traits, and attributes needed in an effective leader. Goleman did not intend to categorize leaders into one of the six leadership styles; rather, he described the application of different styles at different times depending on the circumstances and conditions of the organization and task. Of

⁴ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 5-7.

⁵ US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), x; Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Open Road Media, 1996), 59-61.

these six resonance-building leadership styles, Goleman advised the use of two of them cautiously. Ironically, those two are the styles most commonly seen in combat leadership.⁶

Goleman called the first of these two styles *pacesetting*, arguing that one will find it used often in organizations composed primarily of high-performing and competent subordinates who continually challenge each other to achieve new goals. He named the second of these styles *commanding*, which leaders use in times of crisis where they require clear, concise, and immediate direction to achieve a goal. While these leadership styles do produce positive results in specific organizations, Goleman argued that these styles pose the biggest risk to creating dissonance if the leader lacks EI.⁷

Another reason that the US Army lacks interest in EI is the concept's subjectivity. No numerical and universally accepted measurement for an individual's EI exists, making it difficult for researchers to prove EI's benefits.⁸ However, scientific data from the psychology field shows EI is not just a new and unsupported concept. Psychologists explain that the human brain's ability to manage emotions depends largely on external sources. For example, a researcher ensured that an intensive care patient always had a person with a positive demeanor in the patient's room. Over a couple of weeks, the patient's blood pressure readings, resting heart rate and arterial fatty acid secretion all reduced significantly. Similarly, the psychological phenomenon of *mirroring*, in which two people with different psychological profiles engage in conversation, reveals the

⁶ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 55. This study only applies Goleman's pacesetting and commanding leadership styles because they are the styles seen most often in military leadership, and they can quickly create dissonance if used incorrectly. Goleman's other four styles not used in this study are visionary, coaching, affiliative, and democratic.

⁷ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 72-78.

⁸ Peter G. Northouse notes that there are ways of measuring EI in his book. These include the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso EI test (MSCEIT) and the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal that measures an individual's EI Quotient (EQ), created by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves. However, these tests are not as widely accepted as a test such as the Myers-Briggs Indicator for personality traits. Since these measurement scales require individuals to take the test to measure their EI, they did not apply to the historical case studies analyzed below. Therefore, these tests are omitted from the research. Northouse, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, 28, 37; Travis Bradberry and Jean Graves, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* (San Diego, CA: TalentSmart, 2009), 10-12.

external effect on emotion management—after just fifteen minutes the individuals began to emulate each other’s facial expressions, mannerisms, and even heart rates. A person’s emotional stability depends on connections with other people, therefore positive or negative emotions spread through organizations. It is therefore up to the organizational leader to recognize any positive or negative trends and ensure subordinate leaders are constantly steering the team towards a common objective.⁹

Despite EI’s subjectivity and its apparent absence from US Army doctrine, many of the EI competencies overlap with aspects of the US Army leadership requirements model (ALRM). Goleman broke down EI into eighteen different competencies (see Figure 1). In contrast, the US Army leadership model, shown in Figure 2, uses thirteen attributes and eleven competencies, broken down into detail throughout Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, to outline the expectations of a US Army leader. These two figures do not appear similar, but Table 1 shows the linkage between EI and the US Army’s leadership model. Additionally, the ALRM outlines many more expectations of a leader than Goleman’s EI, therefore, not every aspect of the ALRM connects with EI. However, all of Goleman’s EI connects in some way with the ALRM, as seen in the far-right column of Table 1 with a page reference to the supporting justification in ADRP 6-22.¹⁰

⁹ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 6-7.

¹⁰ Gerald F. Sewell, “Emotional Intelligence and the Army Leadership Requirements Model,” *Military Review* (November-December 2009): 94-7; Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 39; US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-5, 4-2, 6-7, 6-12, 7-8, 7-15.

| | |
|--|--|
| Personal Competence (Capabilities that determine how we manage <i>ourselves</i>) | |
| SELF-AWARENESS | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Emotional self-awareness</i>: Reading one's own emotions and recognizing their impact; using "gut sense" to guide decisions • <i>Accurate self-assessment</i>: Knowing one's strengths and limits • <i>Self-confidence</i>: A sound sense of one's self-worth and capabilities | |
| SELF-MANAGEMENT | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Emotional self-control</i>: Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control • <i>Transparency</i>: Displaying honesty and integrity; trustworthiness • <i>Adaptability</i>: Flexibility in adapting to changing situations or overcoming obstacles • <i>Achievement</i>: The drive to improve performance to meet inner standards of excellence • <i>Initiative</i>: Readiness to act and seize opportunities • <i>Optimism</i>: Seeing the upside in events | |
| Social Competence (Capabilities that determine how we manage <i>relationships</i>) | |
| SOCIAL AWARENESS | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Empathy</i>: Sensing others' emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking active interest in their concerns • <i>Organizational awareness</i>: Reading the currents, decision networks, and politics at the organizational level • <i>Service</i>: Recognizing and meeting follower, client, or customer needs | |
| RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Inspirational leadership</i>: Guiding and motivating with a compelling vision • <i>Influence</i>: Wielding a range of tactics for persuasion • <i>Developing others</i>: Bolstering others' abilities through feedback and guidance • <i>Change catalyst</i>: Initiating, managing, and leading in a new direction • <i>Conflict management</i>: Resolving disagreements • <i>Building bonds</i>: Cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships • <i>Teamwork and collaborations</i>: <i>Cooperation and team building</i> | |

Figure 1. Goleman's EI Domains and Associated Competencies. Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 39.

| | | |
|--|------------------|--|
| Attributes (What a leader is) | Character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Army Values • Empathy • Warrior Ethos/Service Ethos, • Discipline |
| | Presence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military and professional bearing • Fitness • Confidence • Resilience |
| | Intellect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental agility • Sound Judgement • Innovation • Interpersonal tact • Expertise |
| Competencies (What a leader does) | Leads | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads others • Builds trust • Extends influence beyond the chain of command • Leads by example • Communicates |
| | Develops | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a positive environment • Fosters esprit de corps • Prepares self • Develops others • Stewards the profession |
| | Achieves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets results |

Figure 2. Army Leadership Requirements Model (ALRM). US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership*. 1-5 - 1-6.

Table 1. Comparison of the Army Leadership Requirement model and Goleman’s EI Competencies

| EI Competency (From Figure 1) | ALRM linkage (From Figure 2) | Expanded ALRM linkage from ADRP 6-22 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Emotional Self-awareness | Confidence | Demonstrating composure and outward calm through control over one’s emotions (pg. 4-2) |
| Accurate self-assessment | Prepares self | Evaluate one’s strengths and weaknesses (pg. 7-8) |
| Self-confidence | Confidence | Demonstrating self-confidence (pg. 4-2) |
| Emotional self-control | Prepares self | Recognize imbalance of one’s actions (pg. 7-8) |
| Transparency | Army values | Honestly living up to Army values (pg. 3-5) |
| Adaptability | Mental agility | Adapting to uncertain/changing situations (pg. 5-5) |
| Achievement | Gets results | Inherent to mission/task accomplishment (pg. 8-4) |
| Initiative | Gets results | Ability to recognize and seize opportunities (pg. 8-4) |
| Optimism | Resilience | Strong personal attitude helps prevail (pg. 4-2) |
| Empathy | Empathy | Nearly identical (pg. 3-3) |
| Organizational awareness | Extend influence beyond command | Slight similarities within extending influence beyond the chain of command (pg. 6-10) |
| Service | Army Values | Inherent in the Army Value, selfless service (pg. 3-5) |
| Inspirational leadership | Leads others | Through motivation & purpose while communicating a vision (pg. 6-7) |
| Influence | Leads others | Method of rational persuasion (pg. 6-7) |
| Developing others | Develops others | Nearly identical (pg. 7-15) |
| Change catalyst | Leads by example | Seeks new ideas to lead in a new direction (pg. 6-12) |
| Conflict management | Interpersonal tact | Negotiates and resolves conflict (pg. 6-10) |
| Building bonds | Develops others | Cultivates and maintains relationships (pg. 7-15) |
| Teamwork & collaboration | Develops others | Builds team skills and processes (pg. 7-15) |

Source: Table created by author and data compiled from Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 39, 255; US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, 1-5.

The linkage in Table 1 creates another lens to assess US Army leaders. This lens provides a new approach to understanding why public reports show a problem with the quantity and rate of senior commander removals from their leadership positions. For example, reporter Thomas Ricks wrote in *Foreign Policy* in 2015 that the US Army had relieved more than 129 battalion and brigade commanders since 2003. While any organization will remove people from leadership positions for various reasons, the relief of 129 field grade commanders (which does not include general officers) is unsettling—and no public explanation exists for this number of firings. Using the lens of EI, the following study unveils new evidence to show that a lack of EI is a major contributing factor in the firing or removal from command of many US Army battalion and higher-level commanders, and incorporating EI into leadership doctrine could prepare future army leaders more effectively for command.¹¹

Methodology

Analysis of historical case studies reveals why various US Army unit commanders were removed from command, from the start of American involvement in World War II to today. A comparison of the latest US Army doctrine on leadership and studies of EI reveals the similarities and differences between the ALRM and Goleman’s EI competencies; this creates a new lens to analyze leadership attributes, lending a different perspective and reasoning to the firings or failures of army leaders.¹²

The case studies focus on three distinct periods in US Army history; the first group focuses on World War II to the Korean War by analyzing Generals Terry de la Mesa Allen Sr., George Patton, and Douglas MacArthur. The second group centers on the Vietnam War with a large portion of the research focusing on the leadership in the My Lai massacre, along with an

¹¹ Thomas E. Ricks, “Army Discloses it Has Fired 129 Battalion and Brigade Commanders Since 2003,” *Foreign Policy*, February 2, 2015, accessed August 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/02/army-discloses-it-has-fired-129-battalion-and-brigade-commanders-since-2003/>.

¹² US Army, ADRP 6-22 (2012), 1-5; Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 39, 253-6; Bradberry and Graves, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, 23-26.

analysis of additional battalion commanders relieved during the war. The third group includes commanders from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even though there is less data available on the recent firings, they have more relevance to the most recent army doctrine and EI publications than the earlier cases. This chronological grouping binds the commanders around major wars and conflicts while also explaining how the US Army defined leadership during each era. It is important to understand how the US Army and the public defined leadership during each period because this shaped the leaders' environment and contributed to their success or failure. Determining the definition of leadership is a challenging task that has occupied scholars' time since the start of the twentieth century. Additionally, grouping the case studies in this manner rather than selecting certain individuals provides a wider aperture through which to develop the case studies and capture singular but relevant examples of leaders lacking EI. Lastly, the availability of information contributed to selecting events and individuals for analysis in the case studies. Information such as investigations and official records are either very private or vague, making it difficult to identify quality subjects and to extract the detailed facts of their relief.¹³

Upon conclusion of the case studies, causal trends for the commander's removal become evident. The trends offer a different reasoning for the firings, based on the role that the lack of EI played in their removal from command. The trend analysis reveals some reasons for removal based on a failure in a leadership trait cited in both the ALRM and EI, but also exposes many causes of leadership failures not found in the ALRM but included in EI.

Relieved of Command

Selection for a battalion command is a significant achievement in the US Army. For example, the command selection rate for eligible active duty infantry lieutenant colonels was fifty-two percent in 2017, and that percentage only gets smaller as one's rank increases.¹⁴ Given

¹³ Northouse, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, 2-5.

¹⁴ Anthony W. Gore, "Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 CSL Analysis - Infantry" (Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation, US Army Human Resources Command, February 27, 2017).

that selection statistic, one can see why these commands are held in such high regard. However, both the army and individual officers suffer when a superior must remove a commander from a position that had been the hallmark of their careers. It is even more frustrating when the reasons for a tactically competent leader's removal have little to nothing to do with the US Army's mission. Worse yet, the commanders fired for reasons outside of warfighting skills are the ones who make the news headlines that tarnish the public opinion of senior military leadership.

For example, a recent *USA Today* article reported that there have been more than 500 cases of serious misconduct filed against senior military officials since 2013. Of the 500 cases, 234 of the counts fall under the category of personal misconduct or ethical violations. This article further noted that these cases include generals, admirals, and senior civilians, but that number is still astonishing when considering that there are approximately 900 general officers within the ranks at any given time, making one wonder why or how the highest-ranking military leadership keeps getting into trouble.¹⁵

World War II and the Korean War

Prior to America's involvement in World War II, the US Army's expectations of its leaders appeared in four short pages of their 1941 operational doctrine: FM 100-5, Field Service Regulations, Operations. The four pages made up all of Chapter 3, simply titled "Leadership." Only one other chapter out of the sixteen in the manual matched the brevity of the leadership chapter; the chapter titled "Air Task Forces." This indicates that the US Army spent little time and resources explaining and integrating leadership into its operational doctrine. The context of the leadership chapter shared much in common with German doctrine before World War II, with

¹⁵ Tom Vanden Brook, "Senior military officials sanctioned for more than 500 cases of serious misconduct," *USA Today*, October 24, 2017, accessed October 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/10/24/generals-sex-misconduct-pentagon-army-sanctions-hagel-gillibrand/794770001/>; Lawrence Kapp, *General and Flag Officers in the U.S. Armed Forces: Backgrounds and Considerations for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, R44389, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office February 18, 2016), 3.

its focus on the physical endurance required to fight through the pain of war and the discipline required to fight in any situation, doing everything possible to ensure mission success. The doctrine stressed that the leader must instill these aggressive qualities in his men and win with decisive action. The doctrine did little to prepare army leaders to assess and improve the leadership skill of their subordinates. Chapter 3 of FM 100-5 gives the impression that a leader motivates his men to win, no matter how difficult the task or how high the cost.¹⁶

By the start of the World War II, civilian psychologists' definitions of leadership began to evolve. Shifting focus from the individual leader to the group led, these psychologists examined how leaders drove group activities toward a common goal instead of just pushing forward relentlessly no matter what anyone else thought. This leadership style differed from the view of leadership held by senior army leaders for the thirty years preceding the war. This leadership view is important to understand when analyzing the leaders of this era because it coincides with the way Generals Omar Bradley and Dwight Eisenhower selected their senior leaders.¹⁷

In World War II, Bradley and Eisenhower wanted a specific type of leader running the army's operational formations. Their criteria favored the quiet, determined, and cooperative officer. While they knew that they needed aggressive leaders, Bradley and Eisenhower did not want subordinates who would argue about or attempt to subvert the missions and directives they received. Further, US Army leaders required the ability to cooperate with their multi-national partners. General George Marshall placed emphasis on this trait in the army's leadership because he wanted to avoid the friction he witnessed between the British and French allies in World War

¹⁶ War Department, *Field Service Regulations, FM 100-5 Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), 18-21; Christer Bergström, *The Ardennes, 1944-1945: Hitler's Winter Offensive* (Eskilstuna, Sweden: Vaktel Förlag, 2014), 55-56; Gregory W. McClean "Leadership Principles for the New ADP 6-22" (master's thesis, US Army Command General Staff College, 2012), 3, 20.

¹⁷ Northouse, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, 2; Thomas E. Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), 96.

I. Marshall also wanted senior leaders who could both figure out what to do and get people to do it. He wanted leaders involved in the critical thinking of developing strategic plans but also the human and emotional realm of managing peers, subordinates, superiors, and allies. Even though Marshall wanted to serve as the supreme allied commander in WWII, President Roosevelt wanted Marshall to focus on force build-up in the states, resulting in Eisenhower's selection to serve overseas. Eisenhower understood and shared Marshall's leadership expectations, but three American generals had a particularly difficult time understanding their way of thinking.¹⁸

Terry de la Mesa Allen commanded the 1st Infantry Division until Bradley removed him from command in 1943. Prior to his relief, Allen had developed a reputation as a highly successful commander with a long history of success that dated back to World War I, and included his participation in the cavalry battles along the border between Texas and Mexico prior to World War II. Allen even appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine the week of the controversial battle that led to his removal from command. Historians usually cite Allen's performance during the battles at Tronina, during the Sicily campaign, as the reason for Allen's relief, but the decision remains controversial. Others argue that Allen was responsible for winning this week-long fight in Tronina, successfully repelling twenty-four counterattacks. Even Patton, who admired Allen, thought Tronina was the toughest fight in all the Sicily campaign. However, official historians Garland and Smith accuse Allen in *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* of displaying excessive risk aversion caused by his desire to protect his men, leading to tactical setbacks and delays that allowed the Germans to withdraw while still inflicting heavy casualties on the 1st Infantry Division. Despite the conflicting accounts of Allen's success, one thing is

¹⁸ Stephen E. Ambrose, "Eisenhower's Generalship," *Parameters* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2010-11): 90-98; Ricks, *The Generals*, 40-44, 96.

clear—Bradley removed Allen from command after the fighting in Tronia, but with no explanation.¹⁹

Perhaps Bradley did not provide an explanation for Allen's removal because Eisenhower appreciated Allen's previous successes and wanted to give him another chance, while still sending a message to all the other division commanders. Eisenhower's approach to managing his senior leaders included, in most situations, giving them a second chance. Throughout all of World War II, sixteen general officers were relieved of command, but five of those sixteen were given a second command. Allen was one of those five, taking command of the 104th Infantry Division after the division completed its mobilization training in the United States. Allen eventually deployed and led the 104th through Normandy and into Germany to finish the war.

The fact that Allen commanded another division after his relief in Sicily supports the theories of those historians who believe that Allen received unfair treatment, or superiors used him as an example. However, one can interpret Allen's removal as evidence that he lacked the organizational awareness to understand the vision of his superior leaders. In addition, Allen failed in Sicily to act as a change catalyst for his division, falling out of step with the US Army as it changed its conduct of operations and management of senior leadership. Allen earned the nickname of "Terrible Terry" Allen before World War II because of the aggressiveness and energy that he applied to everything he did. However, Allen still lacked the ability to recognize the changing power relationships, networks, and influencers at the top of the US Army. Much like Allen failed to sense the changes in his senior leaders, he also failed to change the way he communicated and negotiated with them. Allen did not need to change the way his division

¹⁹ Albert N. Garland and Howard M. Smyth, eds., *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy, United States Army in World War II, The Mediterranean Theater of Operations* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1965), 346-47; Ricks, *The Generals*, 73, 75-78.

fought to avoid relief from command; rather, he needed to recognize and adjust to the changing behavior of his senior leadership and channel that change into himself and his division staff.²⁰

Patton, like Allen, retained a preference for the pre-World War II army. In addition to Patton's success in combat, he is also known for two non-combat events that showed his lack of empathy. In Italy, Patton slapped a US soldier for not returning to the front lines of battle, calling him a coward. Although he survived this episode with the support of Eisenhower, Patton soon made headlines again. Patton claimed publicly that there was an "evident destiny that Brits and Americans would rule the world"—this politically charged assertion stretched the bounds of Eisenhower's and even Marshall's political protection to their limit. Both of Patton's incidents show a tactically competent leader at risk for removal due to a lack of empathy.²¹

Despite how this behavior reflected on Patton, Eisenhower's strong sense of organizational awareness enabled him to see Patton's value to the army and the war effort. Eisenhower mentioned that Patton was the "best at the pursuit." The pursuit is just one type of operation, but Eisenhower recognized the value of this skill in the campaigns of World War II and he believed no one could do it better than Patton. Therefore, Eisenhower prevented Patton's removal from command and put him in positions where the ability to pursue the enemy was essential to success. Eisenhower protected Patton, making him a bit of an anomaly in this research, but this case study reveals examples of Patton's significant lack of EI whereas Eisenhower displayed strength in his EI.²²

General Douglas MacArthur showed a lack of EI in World War II, but he was not relieved of command until the Korean War. Despite MacArthur's reputation as a military hero

²⁰ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 230-33, 256; Richard H. Johnson, Jr., "Investigations into the Reliefs of Generals Orlando Ward and Terry Allen" (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2009) 30-31.

²¹ Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall, Organizer of Victory, 1943-1945* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 384.

²² Ricks, *The Generals*, 63; Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 55, 255-56.

with an impressive career, his superiors and peers alike viewed him as an emotional, abrupt, and selfish leader. These characteristics contributed to MacArthur's significant lack of self-awareness—it remains a mystery how he managed to stay in senior-level positions during World War II, when he clearly did not fit the cooperative style of leadership that Eisenhower and Bradley sought in their generals. Historians have put forward the theory that MacArthur was so overtly vocal about his political opinions and the civilian-military relationships of senior leaders that it was safer to keep him serving in uniform and overseas. Others have argued that keeping MacArthur in reserve provided US politicians a scapegoat for any possible military mistakes.²³

MacArthur held the dual role of Commander in Chief, Far East Command (CINCFE) and Commander in Chief, United Nations (CINCUN) in December 1950 when the 8th US Army and X Corps advanced to the Yalu River in North Korea. The Communist Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) along with the North Korea People's Army (NKPA) repelled this US advance and caused critics to start judging the way MacArthur was leading the war. Even though the Joint Staff approved MacArthur's plan for this advance he still received the brunt of the blame, putting in motion the series of events that ultimately led to his relief from command. The root cause for this failure was not so much MacArthur's plan as it was the inadequate intelligence of the PLA and NKPA, which estimated enemy troop strength as far less than what the 8th US Army and X Corps faced. Nevertheless, MacArthur continued to shoulder the blame, leading him to openly criticize US policy, and ultimately to attempt to seize control and build a unilateral

²³ Robert H. Berlin, "Dwight David Eisenhower and the Duties of Generalship," *Military Review* 70, no. 10 (October 1990): 18-9; Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 40-44, 253; Ricks, *The Generals*, 96-98. Another possible reason that MacArthur avoided removal in WWII was that he served in the Pacific theater, most notably as the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Southwest Pacific, while Eisenhower served in Europe and President Roosevelt (later President Truman) remained in the United States. This large geographical separation from Eisenhower and the two US presidents possibly helped avert any repercussions from MacArthur's actions or comments.

policy of his design. This effort to override his civilian leaders eventually led Truman to fire MacArthur.²⁴

One can see MacArthur's lack of EI in the way he managed his organizations. He preferred loyalists as subordinates; "yes men" who lacked the personal courage to provide candid feedback to the commander. MacArthur made little effort to cultivate and develop others, further displaying his lack of self-awareness and self-management competencies. All these shortcomings compounded to create a senior leader who failed to communicate appropriately with his superiors. Furthermore, the fact that MacArthur challenged President Truman by seeking to take control of US and allied policy regarding the Korean War exemplified MacArthur's lack of self-awareness.²⁵

When the public learned of MacArthur's removal in April 1951, MacArthur handed his command over to General Matthew Ridgway professionally and then returned home to parades in his honor as an American war hero. While MacArthur's accomplishments and patriotism are significant to US History, this war hero unfortunately left a mark that affected generations of senior leaders during the next two decades. This mark was the scar of poor civilian-military relationships going into the Vietnam War that heavily influenced a different era of US Army leadership styles.²⁶

Vietnam

During and after the Vietnam War, US Army views on leadership changed significantly. Even though the term EI did not yet exist, psychologists increasingly studied the impact that

²⁴ R. Ernest Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History: From 3500 B.C. to the Present*, Revised ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 1245-7; Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 190-91.

²⁵ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 40-2, 256; Ricks, *The Generals*, 126, 193; Bevin Alexander, *Macarthur's War: The Flawed Genius Who Challenged the American Political System* (New York: Berkley Books, 2013), 173-76.

²⁶ Alexander, *Macarthur's War*, 176-81.

emotions play on decision-making and leadership. A British psychologist named Norman Dixon authored the book *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* in 1976, in which he argued,

On the contrary, by looking further into the nature of decision-processes namely, that the apparent intellectual failings of some military commanders are due not to the lack of intelligence but to their feelings. Cognitive dissonance, pontification, denial, risk-taking and anti-intellectualism are all, in reality, more concerned with emotion than with intelligence.²⁷

Even though Dixon is a British author, his findings addressed many issues seen in the US military during this period. Dixon understood that military leaders often face a greater amount of stress from the level of responsibility inherent with life and death scenarios.

In addition to psychology becoming more prevalent in the study of emotions and military leadership, an unfortunate shift occurred in the characteristics of senior leaders. During the Vietnam era, senior leaders appeared to possess a regressive set of values not seen in US military officers during World War II and the Korean War. In 1970, a US Army War College analysis reported that the traditional standard of the American military officer had changed from “duty, honor, country to me, my ass, and my career.”²⁸

This unfavorable quote derived from a report that General William Westmoreland directed while serving as chief of staff of the army. Westmoreland ordered the preparation of this report after he reviewed the investigation summaries surrounding the March 1968 massacre at My Lai in Vietnam. The leadership behavior from the division commander down to the platoon leader befuddled Westmoreland and he needed to know if this behavior could be spreading throughout the army. He also wanted to understand how such a significant change happened in senior leader

²⁷ Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1976), 168.

²⁸ Dandridge M. Malone and Jim Shelton, *The Trailwatcher: A Collection of Colonel Mike Malone's Writings* (Fort Eustis, VA: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1982), 185-87.

behavior compared to the behavior of officers from two decades ago, since most senior officers in Vietnam had served in World War II and the Korean War.²⁹

Additional observations from the US Army War College report found that the overall management of officers shifted drastically during the Vietnam War. First, the leadership mentality from World War II had disappeared by the Vietnam era. Senior leaders no longer relieved incompetent leaders and the officers selected for promotion no longer displayed the strong, cooperative team-player mentality seen in previous wars. Additionally, the US Army's tactical losses during the Korean War caused morale to deteriorate throughout the force. Some journalists asserted that the dominant characteristics of the American armed forces in Vietnam included professional arrogance, lack of imagination, and moral and intellectual insensitivity. Further, risk aversion served as a contributing factor for this change in organizational leadership. Officers of this era feared the repercussions of personal failure far more than their predecessors, leading them to write overly optimistic reports for their superiors, which exacerbated their reluctance to spend time with their subordinates to learn the characteristics and behavior of their own teams and mentor subordinate leaders. This leadership style did not change until years after the US military's transition to the all-volunteer force in 1973.³⁰

The first of the two case studies for this era establishes the context for military leadership in Vietnam. This case study explores a wider range of EI failures based on evidence drawn from a 1976 master's thesis from the US Army Command and General Staff College. Marine Major Thomas Draude wrote his thesis "When Should a Commander Be Relieved?" to determine if mission-oriented failures caused the relief of American platoon, company, and battalion

²⁹ Jonathan Lee Due, "SEIZING THE INITIATIVE: The Intellectual Renaissance that Changed US Army Doctrine, 1970-1982" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007), 24-25; Ricks, *The Generals*, 217, 247.

³⁰ Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* (New York: Viking, 2003), 400; Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 285.

commanders in the Vietnam War. Draude's research benefited from his interviews of many fellow graduates of his 1975-1976 class, several colonels, three active duty general officers, and three retired general officers on Fort Leavenworth, for a total of fifty-six surveys. Draude's work found that mission-oriented failures only accounted for eighteen percent of the relieved commanders while thirty-three percent were the result of personality conflicts and poor judgment.³¹

The personality conflicts that Draude found are more akin to excuses for relieving a commander than a valid cause for relief. This stemmed from changes in the personnel management system used in Vietnam in which battalion commands in combat only lasted six months, creating an environment in which senior officers quickly removed subordinates that their superior simply did not like, knowing that they could easily find new leaders to replace those that they relieved of their duties. One of the general officers in this study noted a common perception among his subordinate leaders that the division preferred to relieve commanders rather than train them. This enabled the superior to accuse a battalion commander of being untrained and quickly remove him from command.³²

More applicable to EI failures, reliefs for poor judgment in Vietnam aligned more closely with a lack of organizational awareness than a leader's soldierly qualities. One of Draude's interviews focused on a logistics battalion commander, relieved from command for allowing Vietnamese civilians to sell equipment through a black-market scheme, from his logistical support area. The resulting investigation revealed that the commander focused on his supply mission to the point that he did not engage his soldiers or understand the inner workings of his battalion. The commander focused on administrative matters like the statistical data to prove the

³¹ Thomas V. Druade, "When Should a Commander Be Relieved? A Study of Combat Reliefs of Commander of Battalions and Lower Units During the Vietnam Era" (master's thesis, US Army Command General Staff College, 1976), 8-9, 20-22, 32.

³² Druade, "When Should a Commander Be Relieved?" 35, 27, 39.

performance of his support area, while allowing morale to plummet and indiscipline to fester in the ranks. His neglect of important leadership duties resulted in a unit environment in which soldiers allowed locals to conduct black market operations in the logistical base.³³

Draude also described the case of an engineer battalion commander during the Cambodia incursion who lacked organizational awareness. This commander did not define priorities of support, instead detaching his subordinate engineer assets to any supported unit that asked for them. The commander did so because he worried more about others' perceptions of him than his unit's ability to support maneuver units or surge support to key units and operations, leading him to support any request presented to him. In time, he lost track of his subordinate units, blind to the fact that parceling them out with no rhyme or reason and denying them time to rest or maintain unit equipment exhausted his soldiers past the point of no return.³⁴

One of the most significant examples of poor leadership during the Vietnam War took place at the village of My Lai. The leadership gaps and lack of EI surrounding the My Lai massacre existed from the division level all the way down to its platoons. On the surface, one can conclude that one platoon leader, First Lieutenant William Calley, bears full responsibility for this tragic incident, particularly since he was the only officer convicted for the murders at My Lai. The company, battalion, and brigade commanders also stood trial, but received acquittals. However, a deeper investigation of Lieutenant General Peers' report shows that a lack of EI existed not only within the composite task force (TF) Barker (the battalion-sized element that conducted the assault on the My Lai village), but throughout the entire Americal Division. The lack of EI in the unit's leadership, including both the battalion and brigade commander

³³ Draude, "When Should a Commander Be Relieved?" 52.

³⁴ Ibid., 59-60.

contributed to this military failure through their lack of organizational awareness or empathy, and their poor conflict management skills.³⁵

Formed on the island of New Caledonia in 1942, the 23rd Infantry Division consisted of separate brigades whose purpose was to protect the island from Japanese attack. The division created the name *Americal* (a combination of American and Caledonia) to signify its uniqueness as the only division formed outside of United States territory. The Americal Division disbanded after World War II, but reactivated for the Vietnam War along with some newly formed separate brigades, leading to a piecemealed heritage that had a negative impact on unit morale and cohesion. Major General Samuel Koster commanded the Americal Division, consisting of three subordinate brigades. Colonel Oran Henderson commanded the 11th Brigade, the controlling headquarters of Calley's task force at My Lai.³⁶

Task Force Barker, named for its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Barker was piecemealed together with three different companies, just like all the division's other subordinate echelons. This disjointed division operated under a baffling array of command and support relationships, making it a nightmare for any commander to maintain organizational awareness. A division commander must ensure that each commander from the division level and below stays keenly aware of every relationship that the new team creates. A unit removed from its parent unit command and placed under new leadership in the gaining unit is analogous to an adopted child. The receiving unit must spend more time with attachments than its organic units to ensure the attachments understand the standard operation procedure (SOP), command structure, personalities, and climate of their new higher headquarters. Furthermore, doing this in combat

³⁵ Ronald H. Spector, "The Vietnam War and the Army's Self-image," *Second Indochina War Symposium: Papers and Commentary*, ed., John Schlight (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1986); W. R. Peers, "Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident," Volume 1, March 14, 1970, 6-15.

³⁶ Michael Bilton and Kevin Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 64-65.

operations increases stress among the leadership, which leads to confusion in mission orders, lack of unity, and potential for poor communication.³⁷

Even though neither the historical data nor the investigations noted the doctrinal command and support relationships, unit reports reveal that Barker struggled with the administrative and logistic needs of his three companies. This hints at confused command relationships as a cause of confusion because Barker might have assumed his companies had an operational control (OPCON) or tactical control (TACON) relationship (meaning the units would have received administrative support from their parent battalions), but the companies considered themselves attached to TF Barker, all the while wondering who was going to support them. Henderson should have dealt with any such confusion among his subordinate commanders, but his lack of organizational awareness contributed to the confusion and allowed the TF to continue to fight despite any uncertainty about its command and support relationships.³⁸

Even though the companies and higher echelons were in disarray, the platoons achieved greater cohesion, which counterintuitively produced negative effects and contributed to the killings at My Lai. If the senior commanders had more empathy and organizational awareness, they would have seen that this cohesion among the platoons led to growing hatred of Vietnamese citizens. This level of cohesion is understandable because most of the platoons in TF Barker trained together for nine months before deploying to Vietnam, and had three months of combat experience before the My Lai massacre. These twelve months together formed another level of institutionalization in which these soldiers created new interpretations of their own reality in the military. This level of cohesion is a factor in the performance of a military organization because informal leaders within a group instill a sense of pride and purpose based on a commitment to never fail one another—to the point that they will die for each other as they fight towards mission

³⁷ Bilton and Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai*, 65.

³⁸ US Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations*, A-4; Bilton and Sim, *Four Hours in My Lai*, 66.

accomplishment. William Darryl Henderson argued in his book, *Cohesion. The Human Element in Combat*:

The normative power of the cohesive group causes the strong personal commitment on the part of the soldier that he ought to conform to group expectations, that doing so is the responsible thing to do, and that conformity is expected in spite of the fact that he might personally prefer to be doing something else. The development of unit norms and values causes unit members to band together in their commitment to each other, the unit, and its purpose.³⁹

However, as powerful as this cohesion is, it can turn negative quickly if the leader does not watch the emerging set of values, beliefs, and norms. This is where Barker lacked the empathy to see what was happening in his organization.⁴⁰

Both Barker and Henderson lacked the organizational awareness to see that the cohesion of platoons and companies was breeding negative attitudes toward the Vietnamese local population. The unfortunate part of this characteristic is that the battalion and brigade leadership did not notice it and take responsibility for changing subordinates' mindset. Peers' investigation found that Barker was reluctant to visit his subordinate companies or platoons in the field. This basic leadership responsibility—checking on the welfare of one's subordinates—helps a leader understand soldiers' emotional state, evaluate their welfare, and even assess subordinate knowledge of the higher commander's intent. However, Barker's failure to perform this task led the platoons to identify more with each other than with their headquarters, creating the negative cohesion that emerged among the platoons' soldiers. Frequent checks of his platoon leaders could have helped Barker notice their collective hatred of not only the enemy, but also civilian occupants of the village.

A separate investigation revealed another contributing factor to the massacre: the platoon leaders were too young and naïve to correct any wrongdoing or unethical behavior in the

³⁹ William Darryl Henderson, *Cohesion. The Human Element in Combat* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 23.

⁴⁰ Irving L. Janis, "Group Identification Under Conditions of External Danger," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* (1963): 227-38 as quoted in Kelly, 242.

platoons. Peers' report noted that the TF Barker soldiers constantly used derogatory slang for the locals, which led to organizational acceptance among those soldiers that the Vietnamese were inferior to the Americans, which made some of the inhumane acts at My Lai seem more acceptable to the soldiers. Platoon leaders should quell this form of behavior; however, their naïveté and desire to fit in only contributed to it. Calley was one of these young platoon leaders, and this finding contributed to the assessment that he deserved the brunt of the punishment from the court-martial. Still, Calley's superiors did not notice the problem among his platoons and therefore could not effectively review and provide feedback on the plan.⁴¹

Approximately one month before the My Lai massacre, Charlie Company of TF Barker suffered fifteen casualties in one week from mines and booby traps alone, without ever seeing the enemy. These devastating engagements bred an urge for revenge in these soldiers, to the point that they vowed to kill the first thing they saw that resembled the enemy they believed attacked and killed their comrades. TF Barker received reports that the 48th Vietcong Battalion—the enemy force attributed to inflicting the US casualties—conducted re-fit operations in My Lai. Additionally, TF Barker had not closed with the enemy in any form of direct fire contact—a problem because of the existing perception that one could measure the success of a commander and his organization by the number of enemy troops they killed in action. The brigade and battalion commander should have seen these warning signs and established explicit constraints to prevent civilian casualties, but they lacked the empathy and conflict management attributes necessary to do so.⁴²

⁴¹ Peers, "Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident," 8-3 - 8-6; Claude Cookman, "An American Atrocity: The My Lai Massacre Concretized in a Victim's Face," *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 1 (June 2007): 154-57.

⁴² Robert Rielly, "The Inclination for WAR CRIMES." *Military Review* 9 (May-June, 2010): 21; Peers, "Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident," 5-14, 8-3.

While no evidence exists that Barker or Henderson used any explicit or implicit provisions for the deliberate killing of noncombatants in their mission orders, some aspects of the orders reveal how a poorly composed and communicated plan contributed to the events that ended in the massacre of civilians at My Lai. The plan was based on faulty assumptions and inaccurate intelligence estimates concerning the strength and disposition of the enemy and the absence of noncombatants from the operational area. Furthermore, Barker issued explicit orders to burn houses, kill livestock, and destroy any food supplies. These overly aggressive orders coupled with the failure to make any clear distinction between combatants and noncombatants indicate that the commanders lacked the organizational awareness to plan for the requisite constraints that would protect innocent civilians. If any of the commanders had spent more time communicating with their subordinate units and interacting with the troops, they could have recognized the dangerous emotions that distorted the soldiers' perception of the Vietnamese villagers.⁴³

This incomplete plan also serves as evidence of the lack of organizational awareness above the battalion leadership. TF Barker's higher headquarters, 11th Brigade, changed commanders just days before the massacre. Barker was the deputy commander of the 11th Brigade before he took command of the TF, so he and Henderson had built a relationship while serving together. This relationship granted Barker more latitude as a new battalion commander, but this trust in Barker ultimately contributed to Henderson's failure to anticipate or avert the massacre. Henderson's lack of organizational awareness diminished his leadership ability in two specific ways. First, he did not know that the previous 11th Brigade commander displayed a permissive attitude towards the mistreatment of the Vietnamese people by American soldiers. Second, he overestimated Barker's readiness for battalion command because of his strong

⁴³ Peers, "Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident," 5-2 - 5-4.

reputation as the former brigade deputy commander. Thus, Henderson gave Barker unwarranted latitude, leading to a grievous mistake by a subordinate in whom he failed to develop appropriate leadership characteristics. To further compound the latitude given to Baker's planning and execution, his departure from the brigade headquarters occurred simultaneously with a reshuffling of leadership, pushing several officers and NCOs from the 11th Brigade staff out to the subordinate units on the front lines. This reshuffling of personnel degraded the capability of brigade headquarters to provide oversight and support to TF Barker. A better-managed movement of headquarters personnel at this critical transition point could have maintained continuity in brigade and division staff leadership, thereby resulting in a better plan for the operation, and possibly enabling leaders to recognize the danger of sending TF Barker to My Lai caused by the soldiers' poor morale and desire for revenge.⁴⁴

The assault on My Lai began with Henderson and Barker commanding from the air as passengers in separate helicopters, demonstrating their reluctance to lead their troops on the ground while also limiting their ability to control the operation. Barker decided to initiate the assault with artillery fires, and the poorly informed subordinate units assumed that this barrage indicated the presence of enemy troops on the objective and zero noncombatants. One of the helicopter pilots in support of the operation, Hugh Thompson, noticed soldiers executing Vietnamese civilians and intervened. Thompson attempted to block some of TF Barker's advancing troops while also carrying civilians out of the village on his helicopter. Thompson reported the killing of noncombatants to the TF Barker command post multiple times before finally hearing the order over the radio to "stop the killing."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Peers, "Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident," 8-1 - 8-2; William Thomas Allison, *My Lai: An American Atrocity in the Vietnam War*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 19-20.

⁴⁵ Kendrick Oliver, *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory* (Manchester, United Kingdom and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 32; Ricks, *The Generals*, 297-300; Peers, "Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident," 5-6 - 6-14.

Peers' investigation of the My Lai massacre consisted of interviewing more than 400 individuals. The investigation required this thoroughness because some of the people interviewed remarked that the command made every effort to cover up the incident, providing another example of the lack of EI within the leadership responsible for this atrocity. Even though Henderson and Barker did not receive judicial punishment for this scar in American military history, the division commander, Koster, did not make it out completely unscathed. The court-martial found Koster guilty of leading the cover-up, and ordered his reduction in rank to brigadier general.

The US Army experienced significant changes coming out of the Vietnam War. Two of the most prominent changes, with regards to leadership, took place during the transition to an all-volunteer force in 1973, followed by General William DePuy's work in rebuilding the US Army via new and prescriptive operational doctrine. DePuy served as the first commander of the newly-formed US Army Training and Doctrine Command, and his work helped the Army focus on using doctrine to educate and train the force. This allowed for separate publications that governed leadership, placing a greater importance on the actions of leaders and intertwining leadership development throughout all phases of training. The end of the draft also led to significant cultural changes within the army, requiring leaders to change their approach to communicating, understanding, and motivating their formations that were full of soldiers who made the decision to voluntarily join the army.⁴⁶

Iraq and Afghanistan

Fast-forwarding thirty years from the end of the Vietnam War omits several American conflicts. However, the past sixteen years of repeat deployments in support of operations in Iraq

⁴⁶ Robert K. Griffith, Jr., *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force 1968-1974* (Washington DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1997) 49, 181; Paul H. Herbert, "Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations" *Leavenworth Papers*, Number 16, (July 1988): 68.

and Afghanistan created more opportunities for commanders to be relieved, while the internet facilitated faster dissemination of the results of investigations and removals from command. Additionally, these current conflicts have greater relevance to today's army leaders, many of whom have served in one or both theaters.

During the first year of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Lieutenant Colonel Nate Sassaman, a battalion commander, while not officially relieved of command received a written reprimand that led to his immediate decision to retire. A *New York Times* article titled "The Fall of the Warrior King" gave notice to the American public about Sassaman's actions in Iraq and the subsequent trial. Sassaman's commander charged him with attempting to withhold information during an investigation, but as the investigation moved forward, the authorities found that Sassaman's lack of certain attributes led to the incident causing the attempted cover-up. Sassaman lacked the adaptability and organizational awareness to see that his lack of empathy towards Iraqi people and inability to act as a change catalyst for his battalion created an environment in which his some of his subordinates found acceptable the idea of pushing an Iraqi civilian into a river.⁴⁷

Sassaman deployed his battalion as part of the 4th Infantry Division in support of the US ground invasion. His battalion's plan was to deploy into Iraq from the North, via Turkey, and engage in conventional warfare against the Iraqi Army in 2003. However, Turkey did not allow the entire division to deploy across their country and Sassaman's unit found itself in the very complex and hostile town of Samarra, Iraq. At the start of this operation, Sassaman is already facing the challenge of establishing the correct mindset for his battalion that received the mission to bring order to a hostile city. This is the lack of adaptability that hindered his unit. Sassaman made many brilliant tactical decisions in his area and was making progress with regards to securing Samarra and the surrounding villages. However, he and his men struggled to bring the

⁴⁷ Dexter Filkins, "The Fall of the Warrior King," *New York Times Magazine*, October 23, 2005, 52.

intensity down while Sassaman revealed his lack of organizational awareness by openly arguing with his superior commander on a regular basis.⁴⁸

Sassaman was an aggressive commander with a well-known history dating back to his days as a cadet and football player at the US Military Academy. Sassaman was the academy's quarterback and credited with winning the popular Army-Navy game in 1984. Additionally, Sassaman possessed the reputation of a very competent tactical battalion commander, hence the reason that the division commander assigned Sassaman's unit to the complex area infested with Sunni-Shia violence and disorder. Soon, Sassaman found his unit was fully engaged fighting a counter-insurgency—a fight that requires soldiers to understand when to increase and decrease their level of aggression. While this is much easier said than done, to serve successfully as a battalion commander Sassaman needed the organizational awareness to see his men trending too far towards constant aggressive behavior against anyone not wearing a US Army uniform. Sassaman built an organization of mutual respect, but he did not recognize how much his subordinates emulated his aggressive behavior.⁴⁹

Years later in Afghanistan, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Jenio was a rising battalion commander that was well respected by superiors, peers, and subordinates. He served multiple combat tours with Army Rangers; he was extremely fit, and personable. Unfortunately, Jenio's lack of social and organizational awareness led to his firing while deployed to Afghanistan. Jenio's removal received less publicity than Sassaman, but the timing of both removals is interesting. Sassaman's incident occurred in the early months of the Iraq War, when the conflict still received heavy media coverage, particularly when the insurgency increased their attacks and caused the American public to focus heavily on the American military response. Similarly,

⁴⁸ Nathan Sassaman and Joseph Layden, *Warrior King: The Triumph and Betrayal of an American Commander in Iraq* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008), 61-62; Jeffrey S. Dietz, "Warrior King: The Triumph and Betrayal of an American Commander in Iraq," *Army Lawyer* no. 447 (August 2010): 6.

⁴⁹ Filkins, "The Fall of the Warrior King," 52.

Jenio's removal occurred when General Stanley McChrystal was in command of all US Forces in Afghanistan, President Barack Obama had recently taken office, and the Afghanistan Strategy was under a microscope. Each commander's incident and subsequent relief occurred when the wars were a major focal point in the news.⁵⁰

In 2009, the relief of Jenio and his command sergeant major resulted from their habit of allowing PowerPoint presentations in their briefings that contained racially insensitive slides. Neither Jenio nor his command sergeant major intended to offend anyone or commit any wrongdoing by these slides. The slides appeared in their daily briefs to bring some levity to a stressful and sometimes depressing combat environment. However, Jenio lacked the environmental empathy needed to recognize the negative effects of the PowerPoint slides. More importantly, he lacked the organizational awareness to understand that the presentation and content of the slides was inappropriate for the times and location.⁵¹

Jenio's battalion operated in Kandahar during a high-stress period, just as the surge of US troops began, causing US casualty rates to steadily increase. Jenio was not particularly fond of the depressing casualty data contained in the daily update briefs and he encouraged his junior staff to add some humorous slides into the briefing. However, Jenio failed to fully appreciate the environment he was working in and how quickly his guidance became misconstrued. Jenio lacked the social awareness to see that his subordinates took his word as gospel, and their great respect for their commander was so high that they wanted to accomplish any task to the highest degree. Therefore, the unit wanted to meet the commander's intent of bringing humor into the briefs, but it escalated too quickly and went too far, crossing the line of socially accepted jokes.⁵²

⁵⁰ Joe Gould and Sean Naylor, "Briefings gone bad," *Army Times*, no. 45 (May 23, 2011): 22.

⁵¹ Sean Naylor, "PowerPoint slides spur ouster of CO, CSM," *Military Times*, May 27, 2013, accessed November 2, 2017, <https://www.militarytimes.com/2013/03/27/powerpoint-slides-spur-ouster-of-co-csm/>.

⁵² Naylor, "PowerPoint slides spur ouster of CO, CSM."

Predictably, an incident soon happened that brought this all to the surface, when Jenio's subordinates placed a racially inappropriate slide in a presentation. The presentation eventually reached the higher headquarters and was broadcasted across a video teleconference for most of the US commanders in Afghanistan. Jenio had no idea that this slide was in the briefing, but these slides had been the norm for two months in Jenio's battalion. This is where Jenio lacked the organizational awareness to understand just how far this mentality of accepting and encouraging the inappropriate slides had gone within the battalion, ultimately resulting the removal of a rising and respected commander.⁵³

The event did not occur in combat operations, but instead in preparation for combat operations. More importantly, the last case study addresses a commonly-used term in today's military to describe a bad leader: *toxic leadership*. Over time, this term's widespread and casual usage obscured its definition in ambiguity. Goleman defines a toxic leader as someone who operates solely in a dissonant leadership style while using only threats and coercion to get things done. US Army doctrine describes a toxic leader as selfish, ignoring ideas from others, micromanaging events, hoarding information, undermining peers, and working only to look good in front of superiors. Even though these two definitions do not match, the lack of emotional intelligence is a cause for toxic leadership seen in both definitions, specifically poor self-awareness and self-management.⁵⁴

While stationed in Germany in 2010, Colonel Frank Zachar was preparing his brigade for an operational deployment to Afghanistan when his inaccurate self-assessment, inability to manage himself, and failure to develop others caused his removal from command. An investigation ensued, and many members of Zachar's brigade anonymously accused him of establishing a toxic environment throughout his entire organization, primarily based on his

⁵³ Gould and Naylor, "Briefings gone bad."

⁵⁴ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 194-95; US Army, ADRP 6-22 (2012), 7-2.

tendency to lead by intimidation and threats. Multiple subordinates' statements asserted that Zachar threatened their career progression and even threatened them with physical violence to secure their loyalty. Zachar displayed several aspects of Goleman's definition for toxic leadership, including the inability to manage himself or have the awareness to see how quickly his comments spread through his organization, changing its behavior and morale.⁵⁵

The Army's broader definition of toxic leadership addresses another of Zachar's flaws—his frequent attempts to undermine peers and subordinates. Personnel accused Zachar of forbidding his sergeant major from communicating with other battalion commanders, and of making comments about having moles in the inspector general's office so he could find out which subordinates were talking negatively about him. Zachar's poor relationship with his senior non-commissioned officer drew the attention of the brigade's other senior leaders and staff, causing widespread lack of confidence in the brigade's command team. Zachar lacked the emotional self-awareness to see the damaging effects of this friction and repair his relationship with his sergeant major for the good of the brigade.⁵⁶

Cross-Case Analysis

Table 2 contains a summary of the EI competencies assessed in the case studies, and a comparison of the EI competencies and the ALRM. This summary highlights five EI deficiencies that played significant roles in one or more of the removals from command described above. Organizational awareness stands out as the most prevalent deficiency, followed by empathy, part of Goleman's social awareness domain, noted in Figure 1. Significantly, the definition of empathy already exists in the ALRM, but the definition of organizational awareness does not.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Seth Robson, "Command climate under Zachar 'toxic,' report says," *Stars and Stripes*, February 24, 2011, accessed November 4, 2017, <https://www.stripes.com/news/command-climate-under-zachar-toxic-report-says-1.135797>.

⁵⁶ Seth Robson, "Army relieves 172nd Infantry Brigade Commander," *Stars and Stripes*, January 4, 2011, accessed November 4, 2017, <https://www.stripes.com/news/army-relieves-172nd-infantry-brigade-commander-1.130605>.

⁵⁷ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 255.

Table 2. Summary of EI Competencies and the ALRM

| EI Competency | ALRM Comparison | Examples |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Empathy | Empathy is already defined in the ALRM | (1) Brigade and battalion commanders in My Lai (2) Patton in World War II (3) Sassaman in OIF I (4) Jenio in Afghanistan |
| Change catalyst | Change catalyst is not explicitly defined in the ALRM, but compares closely with <i>leads by example</i> | (1) Allen in World War II |
| Organizational awareness | Organizational awareness does not exist in the ALRM | (1) Allen in World War II (2) Eisenhower in World War II (3) Division to battalion leadership in My Lai (4) Logistics battalion in Vietnam (5) Engineer battalion in Vietnam (6) Sassaman in OIF I (7) Jenio in Afghanistan |
| Self-awareness | Definition compares closely with <i>prepares self</i> in the ALRM | (1) MacArthur in the Korean War (2) Zachar in Germany |
| Adaptability | Definition compares closely with <i>mental agility</i> in the ALRM | (1) Sassaman in OIF I |

Source: Created by the author.

Comparing the role of EI and ALRM deficiencies in the removals of commanders described above reveals that the US Army should add organizational awareness as a competency in its leadership doctrine. As seen Table 1, organizational awareness has some similarities to the ALRM’s *interpersonal tact* and *developing others*, but neither of those army leadership competencies explains the importance of organizational awareness as it applies to subordinate, adjacent, and superior units. Organizational awareness relates to military leadership doctrine

because a commander must understand the social interactions of his subordinates as well as the intricacies of his higher headquarters and adjacent units.

Organizational awareness involves far more than simply knowing the names and capabilities of units and leaders; it requires understanding their behavioral composition and the group dynamics that create the unit's identity and values. Organizational awareness becomes even more important when dealing with command and support relationships of attached units, as seen in the Americal Division at the My Lai massacre. Commanders must strive to be more organizationally aware to prevent their own emotions from influencing the judgment of subordinate units. Psychologist Paul Slovic has argued that an affect heuristic exists in the human brain causes individuals to allow their likes and dislikes to determine what they believe. Army commanders must understand this psychological effect to prevent emotional bias towards units and continue to look more critically at the underlying reasons for a group's behavior, values, and actions.⁵⁸

Conclusion

Given the ubiquitous contributions of deficiencies in one or more of five EI competencies to the removal of tactically competent commanders, one wonders what caused the deficiencies. The case study analysis highlighted two predominant competencies found lacking in the removal of US Army leaders over the past seven decades: empathy and organizational awareness. Goleman argued that leaders who cannot empathize with their subordinates or read the emotions of their organization create dissonant leadership, resulting in a team that does not understand the leader's vision, mission, or intent. A team unbalanced in this way continues to operate poorly and the negative effects compound, eventually leading to a change in leadership or mission failure.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 55, 255; Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011), 103.

⁵⁹ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 19.

One missing link remains in the effort to understand how leaders can achieve the privileged duty of unit command despite their lack of organizational awareness and empathy. While not the absolute cause, the US Army's officer evaluation and promotion system shares some culpability for this deficiency in the modern era. Promotion and command selection results from a leader's receipt of officer evaluation reports (OER) that uniformly identify the officer as a top performer (ranking in the top fifteen to twenty percent of their peers). The OER does not require comments about areas to improve as a leader, and completed OERs often say nothing about the achievements of the organization because of their focus on the individual officer. Over the course of fifteen or more years, an unbroken series of near-perfect evaluations can cause the rated officer to develop an unrealistic sense of self-worth. Such leaders might think that they can do no wrong, and therefore do not need to consider their soldiers' or their organization's emotional well-being to accomplish the mission.⁶⁰

While the OER itself has its flaws in providing accurate feedback to the rated officer, the OER support form exists to fill the gap by allowing commanders to provide candid assessments of both the leader's and the organization's performance. The OER support form is not part of an officer's official records or serves any purpose in promotion or selection boards. Thus, it can serve as both a counseling and an evaluation tool that guides dialogue between the rated officer and the rater. Two of the form's five pages describe the ALRM in detail, making it simple to maintain a dialogue about leader expectations and performance in accordance with army doctrine. This two-way communication provides an opportunity for more effective counseling, in which the superior and subordinate receive feedback on individual assessments and organizational performance, preventing myopic views of the unit or false impressions of one's achievements.⁶¹

⁶⁰ US Department of the Army, Army Regulation (AR) 623-3, *Evaluation Reporting System* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 30.

⁶¹ US Army, ADRP 6-22 (2012), 7-10; US Army, AR 623-3, (2015), 31-3.

With the deficient EI competencies identified and the corrective tools established, the next challenge is improving the counseling culture of the Army. Incorporating the organizational awareness definition in army leadership doctrine would prove beneficial in this respect, because it can prevent leaders from focusing solely on their individual performance. However, in its current state the support form is unlikely to enable such improvements because the ALRM—within the OER support form—is under-utilized. The improvement of subordinate commander performance and development continues to depend upon senior leaders that possess the discipline to maintain an effective counseling program in their organizations. Specifically, the counseling program must be stressed at the battalion level if the culture throughout the army is to change. Battalion command is the threshold between direct and organizational leadership; if the pressure to implement and maintain systematic counseling starts there, it can create the momentum to carry over into the next era of combat leaders.

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