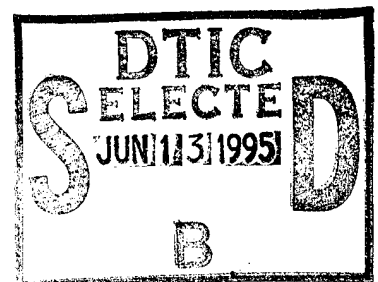
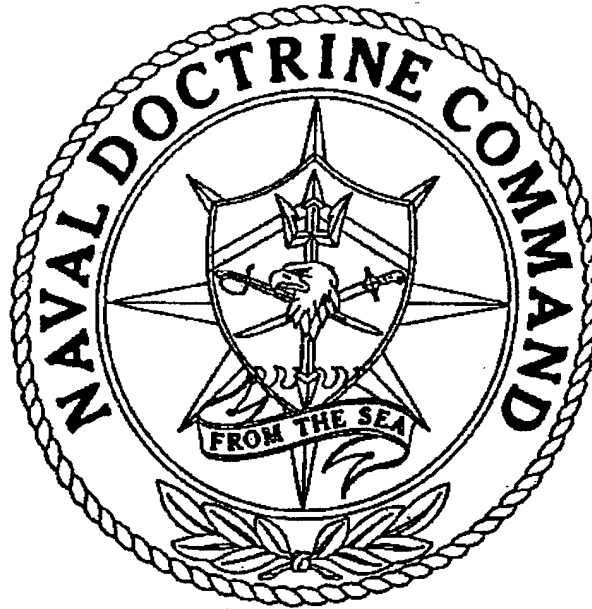


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NAVAL DOCTRINE COMMAND

Norfolk, Virginia



A Charismatic Dimension of Military Leadership?

by

Dr. James J. Tritten

and

Dr. David M. Keithly

May 1995

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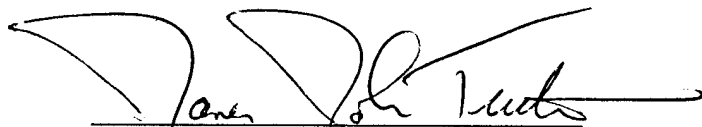
NAVAL DOCTRINE COMMAND
Norfolk Virginia

Rear Admiral F.L. Lewis
Commander

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A Charismatic Dimension of Military Leadership?

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and
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Don't confuse charisma with a loud voice¹
---Harvey Mackay

Over the years the charisma motif has surfaced in discussions of leadership, especially combat leadership. The term "charisma" is frequently used in an imprecise, even ambiguous manner, referring to anyone with flair, flamboyance, or popular appeal, and, at least partly as a result, inquiries into the subject remain regrettably limited in scope. Clearly, a careful and systematic reexamination of charismatic leadership is called for. The purpose of this article is to ascertain the various meanings of charisma in the literature with an eye to determining the distinctive implications for military leadership. Aspects of charisma for purposes of military sociology should be considered under the following headings: charisma and authority, the special two-way relationship, the charismatic personality, transformational leadership, and the exercise of command.

Charisma and Authority

The first methodical study of charisma was conducted by the German sociologist Max Weber early in this century and published in 1924.² Weber took the concept from the Greek, which was used in the literature of early Christianity to refer to "the gift of grace." Charismatic authority, Weber argued, has a mystical quality, clothing a leader with power to captivate people. Weber defined charisma as following:

"The term charisma will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities."³

Charisma has functioned as a cornerstone of religious communities and military structures. In a contemporary analysis,

¹ The views expressed are the authors' and do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Navy. The authors would like to acknowledge the advice and assistance of the following individuals in the preparation of this report: Dr. T. Owen Jacobs; LTG Walter F. Ulmer, USA(Ret.); Lieutenant Colonel Simon F.J. Hollington, Royal Marines.

David Easton holds that in organizations where the behavior and personalities of the occupants of the authority role are of dominating importance, the basis of legitimacy may be highly personal. He submits that leaders engendering legitimacy through their persons are sometimes able to transgress prescribed molds, to be inattentive to usual arrangements.⁴

While the term "authority" generally refers to the regime ruling a particular group or society, legitimacy involves the ability of those wielding power to establish their right to do so. Leaders sufficiently devoid of legitimacy are at an impasse to wield power effectively. Easton identifies three types of legitimacy: personal, ideological, and structural.⁵ In the first case, a strong, charismatic personality fosters legitimacy for a particular regime. In the second, a popular commitment to principles and/or to a *Weltanschauung* (world view) might provide legitimacy. The third, the most enduring source and the one most closely resembling Weber's "right rules of the game," entails prevalent public deference to political processes. Weber stated that societies usually pass through a sequence of three types of legitimate authority: (1), charismatic; (2), traditional; and (3), rational/legal.

Whereas bureaucracies and organizational structures operating within certain parameters generally underpin traditional and rational/legal authority, religious communities and military comradeship based upon charisma differ. Charismatic authority involves a special two-way relationship between followers and the leader in accordance with different and non-traditional patterns that leaders impart. Charismatic authority thus derives not from the office or status of the leader but instead from the capacity of individual leaders to inspire the confidence on the part of others that itself is a source of legitimacy. Leadership, of course, must exist to some extent in each of Weber's three different categories of authority. All the same, traditional and rational/legal forms of authority are not precluded from having leaders with strong charismatic traits. Witness Gamal Nasser in Egypt, still a traditional society, or Charles de Gaulle in France, a developed, rational/legal society where there is considerable popular trust in governmental institutions.

Charismatic leadership, in what might be described as its purest form, involves hero worship, whereby followers respond to a leader's authority in ways very different from that of rational/legal and traditional leaders. This relationship has been described as one in which the leader is an actor on a stage-unaware that his performance is being seen. The dialogue on the stage is between the leader and himself, and the leader has total faith in this inner dialogue. The follower is a spectator who is oblivious to the separation between himself and the leader. The

follower's intellect and emotion are no longer distinct.⁶ Is this not an apt depiction of the "Cross of Lorraine"? Among developed, industrialized societies with considerable structural legitimacy, France is the foremost example of a country with a strong tradition of hero worship.

Observers have identified four major differences between charismatic leaders and traditional or rational/legal leaders.⁷ The first is that followers attribute to the charismatic leader qualities commonly associated within that culture to be spiritual or preternatural. Second, statements and ideas of the charismatic leader are accepted, often unconditionally, by followers simply because the leader has made the statement or advanced the idea. Ideas are not first scrutinized for truth. Third, the followers comply simply because they have been given a command by the leader--no other reason is necessary and the task need not be evaluated first. Fourth, followers respond emotionally to the leaders and, by extension, to his vision or doctrine, in a manner close to religious worship--devotion, awe, reverence, and blind faith.⁸ Therefore, charisma is a special subtype of leadership involving personal qualities and interpersonal relationships between the leader and the follower that are not found in the general population of leaders.

Pure charismatic leaders in history, those about which there is consensus concerning charisma, are rare. These include:⁹ Moses, King David, Jesus Christ, Attila the Hun, Mohammed, Joan of Arc, Peter the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, the Mahdi of the Sudan, Prince Diponegoro of Java, Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Mohandas Ghandi, Fidel Castro, Sukarno, and Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini. Another group are those who have successfully mastered charisma in combination with ideological guidance, such as Mao Tse-tung. According to Easton, ideologies are to be regarded as "categories of thought to corral the energies of men"; from an expressive viewpoint, one should consider them as "ideals capable of rousing and inspiring men to action thought to be related to their achievement." To its champions Marxism-Leninism represented a systematic declaration of values and ideals. Hence the symbiosis of ideology and charisma. It is to be noted that most of these leaders are combat warriors.

Other leaders with charismatic features, but who fail the "purity" test are sometimes labeled "charismatic-like." This group includes: Kemal Atatürk, Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin, Winston Churchill, Juan Perón, Sékou Touré, Jawaharlal Nehru, Ramon Magsaysay, Charles de Gaulle, Gamal Nasser, John F. Kennedy, Kwame Nkrumah, and U Nu. The lack of definitional criteria for determining who is charismatic, coupled with a desire on the part of many political leaders to claim charismatic status, complicate analysis. And because of the penchant of political leaders to portray themselves as charismatic, academic

literature often does not address the question whether charisma can be created. In general, sociologists are inclined to the view that charismatic leadership is situation dependent--the leader emerges from a crisis without which he would not have appeared. Political scientists, wont to review crises during which charismatic leaders have emerged, usually fail to find plausible cause-and-effect and thus avoid offering definitive answers. Psychologists tend to look at the critical inter-personal relationships between leader and follower or attempt to correlate personality traits with biographical experiences. Organizational theorists have explored the role that the charismatic leader plays within an organization. Historians are disposed to use the term ambiguously, with reference to anyone with a flair for leadership or exhibiting unusual leadership qualities.

In short, cogent interdisciplinary studies of charismatic leadership are scant. For the most part, studies of charisma have focused on political and religious leaders who have emerged from societies in crisis, when trust waned and the legitimacy of institutions abraded. Accordingly, charismatic leaders have generally, but not always, been agents of change. When a challenger succeeds in altering the existing order, he often claims support of the populace in order to effect that change, and in doing so, submits that his authority is charismatic.

Charismatic leadership received wider currency in the literature in the mid-1980s as a result of the perceived need for more effective business leadership to revitalize North American industry in the face of a rapidly changing economic environment. Coinciding with this was the advent of non-traditional corporate leaders, some of whom took entirely new management approaches and appeared better able to motivate on a grand scale. Business schools studied such persons as Lee Iacocca of Chrysler, Steven Jobs of Apple Computer, and Roger Smith of General Motors in an effort to grasp their methods and determine the reasons for their success. In focusing on the leader, as opposed to the leader-follower relationship, management studies approach charisma in a way different from that of other disciplines. As a result, business schools tend to embellish individuals with charismatic attributes more readily than other disciplines.

Leadership treatises for business schools and managers have continued to appear in large numbers.¹⁰ Those dealing with charismatic leadership, like many previous studies, are more often than not based on speeches and autobiographical writings. Moreover, these seldom accept the standard academic notions of charisma, using the term loosely by ascribing this trait to anyone who masters change and is perceived as "revolutionary" within an organization. Indeed, the studies usually question whether the "evolutionary" leader can be charismatic.

One of the more prominent and consequential findings in recent management literature is that charismatic leaders are not "cost-free." Analyses of combat leaders such as Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson have drawn similar conclusions.¹¹ The "dark side" of charismatic managers can cause their businesses major problems. For example, the "dark side" may skew the manager's vision of the future, or the individuals involved may be blinded by sheer ambition. Vision, though, is a function of insight; charisma is not. The charismatic leader is inclined to lose contact with followers corrupted by selfish ends and to eschew the feedback necessary to adjust goals in rapidly changing circumstances.¹²

Equally disconcerting, business leaders exhibiting forceful charismatic traits have a strong propensity to foist personal demands and beliefs on constituents. They can quickly lose touch with the marketplace. They tend to be overly critical of others but loath to recognize their own flaws. Charismatic leaders are known to misuse their considerable communications abilities to manipulate groups and organizations, the personal power to control others being a strong draw. They are often impulsive, autocratic, inattentive to details. Their management styles can foster alienation and rivalries and, as will be discussed below in another context, charismatic leadership is usually unstable, at odds with its own foundation.

Yet, assisted by capable supporting staffs, business leaders with charismatic traits display a keen sense of strategic opportunity, similar to what Napoleon referred to as *coup d'oeil*, the inner eye's ability to assess a situation rapidly and to master it.¹³ They are the ones most likely to take the risks necessary to achieve objectives. Studies show how organizations can deal with these flaws. Strong staffs sustained by proper management training and socialization can mitigate negative consequences. In some cases, businesses are simply willing to bear the burdens associated with charismatic leaders. The charismatic business leader may require a management plan to handle him: the case of Michael Milken comes to mind on this score.

Strategic vision in the business sense is largely the product of an incremental process that in turn derives from past experiences, creative insights, opportunity, and not least, serendipity. Leaders with vision have had exposure as a rule to many facets of their business early in their careers and have consequently developed an intuitive sense about the enterprise's needs. Many are able to avail themselves of innovative ideas on offer and have had sufficient occasion to experiment. As a result, they may be more favorably disposed to creativity.

Serendipity plays a large part in the creation of a charismatic business leader. Many businesspeople face markets and technology that are largely beyond their control, notwithstanding their accurate assessments and their determination to shape events. When able leaders perceive an opportunity and are able to seize upon it, they may then be credited with having not only intuition, but charisma. Business literature attempts to demystify intuition by describing it as the ability to synthesize diverse information, weed out the irrelevant, and visualize what remains. This is nothing short of *coup d'oeil*. In an innovative and creative environment, the more positive side of the charismatic leader often presents itself. The charismatic leader is wont to accept uncertainty and is usually enamored of unconventional approaches. As a consequence, charismatic leaders are potential catalysts of change and are often instrumental to the creation of new organizations.

Scholars frequently recommend that companies refine the basic leadership skills of all managers in lieu of cultivating charismatic leaders, and that charismatic leaders be dealt with as need arises. This hardly betokens confidence in charisma. But what of vision? How is it to be nurtured if charisma is not? Many observers submit that recruiting and retaining non-technical managers are key. Research repeatedly indicates that innovation and imagination are in an inverse relationship to proficiency in technical fields. From this one can deduce that a solid grounding in the liberal arts is conducive to the development of imaginative skills.¹⁴ In response to the debates within the military establishment over the need for technical versus non-technical education, one might draw a similar conclusion.¹⁵ With so much technical expertise required in both the military and business, we may be forced to "retool" technically proficient leaders.

Selection, promotion, and training should be geared to engendering vision. One type of widely recommended corporate training entails heightening self-awareness, in particular, "active listening."¹⁶ Companies increasingly recognize the need to find, reward, and retain individuals with stronger-than-average conceptual and creative skills. Individuals with a strong passion for their work are not only far more motivated, but have the most potential to become visionaries. Organizations should accordingly provide opportunities for experimentation in leadership styles. Non-threatening brainstorming sessions sometimes offer a mechanism to stimulate vision. The surest way to terminate creativity is to place creative individuals in an organization that fails to reward creativity and initiative. With specific reference to charisma, one group of researchers believes there to be sufficient knowledge concerning leadership personalities to warrant development of selection procedures for identifying charismatic leadership potential.¹⁷ In pointing out, for example,

that the assignment of a charismatic leader to a fairly routine job requiring reliable but unspectacular performance is likely to be dysfunctional, these scholars underscore the double-edged nature of charisma.

The Special Two-Way Relationship

What, then, is the essence of charisma? The fundamental determinant of the charismatic leader is the perception on the followers' part of charismatic qualities, which on occasion leave the field open to manipulation. So long as the leader can establish and maintain this special relationship, charisma can be said to exist. In seeking evidence of a charismatic presence, one does not primarily scrutinize the leader's attributes, but instead focuses on the responses of followers. Hence, historical combat leadership studies that consider only the traits and deeds of the respective leaders are seriously flawed. Such being the case, in the absence of pertinent data, how is one to study the followers of long-dead charismatic leaders?

One can't.

Psychological studies of charisma usually have as a point of departure the notion that needy followers attempt somehow to resolve inner conflicts between who they are and who they wish to become. Thus do followers substitute the "charismatic" leader for their own ideal. Social psychology and organizational theory approaches are predisposed to emphasize the attraction that followers have for the person and abilities of the charismatic leader. The follower is depicted as being in awe of the leader's vision, communications skills, and ability to motivate and empower subordinates.

Insofar as the pith of charismatic leadership is this special two-way relationship, it is evident why leaders have engaged, for example, in image-building through the media. They are endeavoring to create charisma. Recent research has in fact demonstrated that charismatic properties can be taught, with the frequent result that followers perform better with a greater degree of job satisfaction.¹⁸ A dissenting minority view holds charisma to the result of extraordinarily complex interactions between individuals and their environment and that charisma cannot be taught or willingly devised.¹⁹

If charismatic leadership ensues primarily from the perceptions of followers, then charisma is situation and culture dependent.²⁰ Thus, although Peter the Great might have been charismatic in Russia at a particular time, he would have been less successful in another context. Hitler's rule of Germany is one of the most situationally dependent examples of charismatic leadership of all time: given different circumstances he would

not have attained the powers he did. And Hitler or Stalin enjoying charismatic authority in another cultural context staggers belief. Furthermore, social-cultural contexts have profound impact upon the very concept of the charismatic leader. Japan, for example, has a strong tradition of deemphasizing individual leaders. Although the great victory of Admiral Tôgô Heihachirô at Tsushima in 1905 led to his elevation in the eyes of some to the status of a national hero, officers of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) failed to harbor any special regard for their admiral. Situation- and culture-dependency underscores the absence of a single charismatic personality type.

The Charismatic Personality

Although charismatic leadership is largely situation-determined, it is nonetheless possible to catalog certain charismatic personalities, as one might describe, for example, successful combat leaders.²¹ Yet, any serious examination of the charismatic personality must continue to direct attention to the relationship of the follower with the leader. This relationship encompasses an emotional, spiritual, or non-rational feeling the follower harbors for the leader. It, not the leaders themselves, must be the focal point of the study.

Charismatic leaders have been described as having exceptionally high levels of self-confidence, a need to influence with an attendant ability to dominate, and a strong conviction in the moral righteousness of their beliefs. Some researchers have attempted to trace the roots of charismatic personalities either to very close childhood bonds with parents, which bestowed on them the self-confidence to be creative and self-reliant, or to the untimely death of parents, resulting in a drive to compensate for the loss.²² They are oft portrayed as exhibiting the following attributes: goal articulation, role modeling, personal image building, extraordinary self-motivation, compassion, as well as dynamic, resourceful, and responsive competence that rebels against authority and tradition, sometimes in the name of a group the leader values. Such individuals have exceptional skills of self-expression and are adept at nonverbal cues. They tend to possess considerable insight and are often untroubled by internal conflict.²³ Most are able to articulate a vision and to communicate aspirations that heighten the self-esteem of followers.

Such personality traits are indicative of cerebral right brain thinking--the visionary--as well as that of the limbic right brain--the collaborator. They are not those usually associated with the "ESTJ" pattern on the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator test. The "ESTJ" pattern exhibited by most active duty Army colonels/Navy captains is of someone who is more extroverted (E) rather than introverted (I), more sensing (S) rather than

intuitive (N), more thinking (T) rather than feeling (F), and more judging (J) rather than perceiving (P).²⁴ Individuals more extroverted than introverted will turn to others vice using their own judgment when in need of input to problem solving. Individuals who are more intuitive appear more capable of building complex cognitive maps. An analysis of the personality traits and behaviors associated with charismatic leaders would be exceedingly difficult to conduct and in fact has not been done, if for no other reason than because charismatic leaders run the gamut from the vastly wicked to the saintly. There simply is not an all-purpose charismatic leadership personality profile.

One conspicuous effort to develop a standard charismatic leadership profile for a sub-set of leaders involved U.S. presidents.²⁵ In the study, which contains a number of methodological faults, researchers seek to correlate standard personality traits with the performance of these selected leaders. They characterize between five and seven presidents as charismatic, but the portrayals lack analytical rigor and the term "charisma" is employed loosely. One must question whether U.S. presidents have been able to exercise the influence and power over the population, Congress, and courts that is reminiscent of charismatic leadership. Moreover, U.S. presidents are selected and replaced by what Weber depicted as traditional/legal means, with a minimum of the rituals frequently associated with charismatic leadership.

In light of the ambiguity surrounding the term and the attendant lack of criteria of acceptability, some scholars urge the use of a new expression, one suggestive of charisma but with a wider sweep. This is "transformational leadership."

Transformational Leadership

Bernard M. Bass, a recognized scholar in the area of leadership whose research into the area of leadership has been sponsored by the Office of Naval Research, offers several contributions to the area.²⁶ Bass argued that most studies of leadership involve styles of leadership in which leaders reward subordinates for services rendered, that is, "transactional" leadership. He suggested that a new type of leader should be studied and a model for educating leaders, to include military leaders, accordingly developed.

This new model is that of the "transformational" leader-- first expounded by James MacGregor Burns in his pioneering and Pulitzer Prize-winning 1978 book *Leadership*.²⁷ The "transformational" leader is one who articulates a reasonable vision of the future that can be shared and understood by subordinates, but at the same time empowers the group to act. Inspired by the charismatic-like transformational leader,

followers accomplish more because they have a clearer vision of what needs to be done and consequently exert extra effort. H. Ross Perot is an example of a transformational leader who did not attain the following necessary to be called charismatic.

A 1986 management treatise *The Transformational Leader*²⁸ further developed Burns' ideas. The authors, Noel M. Tichy and Mary Anne Devanna, employed business case studies to produce their own transformational leadership concepts. Instrumental to these is right brain visioning. In the second edition of the book, a list of transformational leadership characteristics is on offer. These include: (1), self-identity as agents of change; (2), courage; (3), belief in people; (4), value-driven; (5), life-long learners; (6), the ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty; and (7), vision with an ability to translate this so that others can share in the change process.

Bass, for his part, argues that attaining charisma in the eyes of one's subordinates is central to the transformational leadership process. Charisma provides followers with a vision, a sense of mission that they can appreciate. Followers then have faith in the leader and abet his focus of effort. Bass' research supported the conclusion that organizations receive higher payoffs when leaders articulate a shared vision of the future in a manner that arouses confidence and commitment. Another observer, Peter Senge, also underscores the linkage between charisma and shared vision, noting also that shared vision is one of the five cornerstones of what he terms the "learning organization."²⁹

Transformational leaders tend to thrive in an atmosphere of innovation and creativity and are more likely to emerge in times of stress and disorganization. Similarities to pure charismatic leaders present themselves here.³⁰ As with charismatic leaders, transactional leadership behaviors appear to be associated more with right brain thinking and with the "NP" pattern, that is, "intuitive-perceiving," on the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator test.³¹

Bass cites three generals as salient examples of transformational leaders: Napoleon Bonaparte, Ernst Rommel, and George S. Patton. Each recast the military organization he commanded. Each was willing to accept calculated risks. The implicit assumption is that combat leadership is not unique and has lessons pertinent in other areas. Patton's selection should remind us that transformational leaders can be troubled with a "dark side," as can charismatic leaders.

Bass went on to synthesize survey studies in which hundreds of business, government, and academic leaders, as well as senior U.S. Army officers were evaluated by subordinates. He also

conducted a study of U.S. Navy officers that likewise used assessments by peers and subordinates.³² The results of other researchers employing the transformational leadership paradigm to evaluate U.S. Navy officers correspond closely to those of Bass.³³ Notably, a recent article in *Airpower Journal* states that the U.S. Air Force is incorrectly shifting emphasis away from transformational leadership back to transactional leadership, a move likely to inhibit the ability of leaders to develop *coup d'oeil*.³⁴

Transformational leaders tend to display concern for individuals within the organization and to spur subordinates intellectually by enabling them to look at problems a new way. Empowerment as a means to attain goals is instrumental to transformational leadership. The transformational leader stresses problem-solving in sharp contrast to the pure "charismatic" leader. In fact, recent studies have investigated why so many business leaders believe they are empowering subordinates, yet fail to understand enough about themselves and their respective organizations to know that they are not.³⁵ One scholar has postulated that, in some cases, the pure charismatic leader does not empower his followers at all.³⁶

Remarkably, some observers have concluded that the differences between transformational and charismatic leadership are hardly worth discussing, that one should, in fact, consider the terms identical.³⁷ This seems very wide of the mark, above all, because it is apparent that meaningful distinctions exist between pure charisma and the mere charismatic traits exhibited by the transformational leader. Transformational leaders need not be especially charismatic precisely because they are inclined to divert the attention of followers with empowerment. Studies sponsored by the Office of Naval Research reinforce the distinction between the latter and charismatic leadership. Bass, for his part, urges the military to recognize that transformational leadership can be kindled and nurtured through training and education.³⁸ With appropriate recruitment, selection, and promotion, organizations can foster the development of such leaders. Not all scholars agree,³⁹ but studies of transformational leadership indicate that this approach should be of considerable interest to the uniformed services.

To foster transformational leadership, organizations should reward managers who practice the proper kind of empowerment. Such culture change seldom comes easily; but, without adequate sponsorship from above and a modicum of support from below, change will not occur. With the U.S. military intent on producing junior-grade leaders with sufficient initiative to be able to execute maneuver warfare doctrine, for instance, the need in the military for transformational leadership with its ensuing empowerment principle seems apparent.

Command Leadership

Few studies of military leaders have aspired to apply theoretical work on charisma to a specific military situation. One recent work that does is Garry Wills' examination of King David of Israel.⁴⁰ Here Wills uses one of the examples of charismatic leaders Weber also identified, one who also is perchance a military leader.⁴¹ In King David Wills offers what he considers a sympathetic model of a charismatic leader.

What might one conclude about King David's military leadership? Wills argues that he stood outside the regular forms of authority. The ultimate test of this leader's charismatic authority is the followers' response. Was he a largely sympathetic figure in sharp contrast to recent, less savory examples, e.g., Stalin, Hitler or Castro? Clearly he was. Was he a successful military leader? This he was as well. What drawbacks are most apparent? First, his authority, as Weber asserted, as is the case with all authority, is subject to *Veralltäglicung* ("everydaying" or "routinization"). When charismatic authority reaches this point--King David's leadership was no exception--it must resort to other, more banal means to exercise power. Because the leader did not attain power by traditional accord or legal compact, authority necessarily wanes through routinization. As Wills puts it, the tired charismatic leader must resort to procedures that are anything but charismatic; in extreme cases, to secret police, spies and executions. Should the reigns of terror that have periodically taken place in history, often in association with charismatic leaders, then come as any surprise?

In King David's case, despite a long and enlightened rule, he was unable to bequeath a united kingdom to an heir. In this botch, Wills argues, is to be found the "grimmiest lesson" of charismatic leadership. Specifically, it tends to be short-lived, not in accord with its own fundaments. Since charismatic leadership has an essential transcendental or spiritual element, any failure invariably and substantially undermines authority.⁴²

Another military study of a different age found that U.S. Army combat officers were more likely to have demonstrated qualities of "transformational" leadership, including "charisma," than officers assigned to combat service support.⁴³ The study, unfortunately, fails to explain why this is so. One possibility is that officers assigned to combat units have developed, or somehow naturally possessed, more charismatic attributes. Another is that the followers in combat service support might tend to be the type of individuals who do not need to see much charisma in their leaders. That the context of combat service support does not depend as much on the inspirational motivator as does the combat environment is yet a third.⁴⁴ In a combat environment there

are more crises and life-and-death situations: hence, charismatic traits may be born out of necessity.

If charismatic leaders evince certain messages, or proffer visions of the future, then, by definition, these must be accepted without question by followers. It stands to reason that any doctrine or new paradigm developed by a charismatic leader flows from the top down and probably without the participation of the followers. Charismatic leaders are assumed to be able to ascertain the needs of followers and to deliver the message the latter want to hear. The message and vision of a charismatic leader have frequently, but not always, sprung from a climate of crisis and originated from leaders willing to challenge the existing order with new ideas. Such processes do not describe military doctrinal development in the U.S., although these may point to the role played by visionary military leaders attempting to introduce new technologies or ideas into the bureaucracy from a position within the organization. Doctrine has often changed with the introduction of new technologies, and doctrinal development can play a role in facilitating revolutionary change within the military.

Charismatic leadership theory depicted the leader as an outsider until historical evidence was presented showing that revolutionary forces can exist within organizations.⁴⁵ Although Admiral Rickover repudiated the need for charismatic leaders, adding parenthetically that he had the charisma of a chipmunk,⁴⁶ he did nonetheless have a special relationship with his followers. His uncommon facility to motivate others and faith in his own authority as the sole source of legitimacy were attributes indicative of charismatic leadership. Since Rickover was not a combat leader, his case suggests the occurrence of both combat and non-combat instances of charisma in the military. Most observers recognize the charismatic traits of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, and George S. Patton. As is often the case with political leaders, the term "charisma" is used loosely in the military context and studies sometimes overgeneralize.

Two researchers, looking at four separate military instances of what they call "inspirational" leadership, have concluded that this correlates positively to high levels of follower motivation.⁴⁷ Inspiration and motivation are facets of leadership now well understood in the military and ones business school psychological studies endeavor to transfer to their clients. Military leaders have often grasped the significance of authority symbols in awakening the emotions necessary to bolster effective combat performance.⁴⁸ Julius Caesar achieved one of his greatest victories at Alesia while wearing a bright red cloak so as to inspire his men by his presence. In that battle, Caesar won against Arvernian Vercingetorix who reportedly had five times as

many warriors as did Rome. Legend has it that Caesar's charisma made all the difference.

Similarly, Nelson stood on the quarterdeck of *HMS Victory* at the battle of Trafalgar (1805) in full uniform with medals and sword, so that his presence, one presumes, would inspire his men.⁴⁹ Individuality in dress is often intended to demonstrate audacity in the face of the enemy, which both sides might perceive as such. Patton's accouterments, along with his flag and pearl-handled revolvers, were orchestrated to inspire the confidence in his followers from which unquestioned loyalty would ensue. Inherent to any effort to lead a cohesive team is the conjuring of affiliative motives, by personal example and by symbols. In extreme cases, of course, this can assume immense proportions and even grotesque shapes. Witness Hitler's masterful manipulation of national symbols and popular myths. But charismatic leadership need not involve the exploitation of symbols or crude propaganda. The charismatic combat leader need not actually retain a presence at the forward line of troops.

One of the world's earliest documented cases of the charismatic combat leader is that of Alexander the Great who occupies an uncommon position, akin to that of Nelson, being both a tactician, strategist, and combat leader of enormous courage. His self-confidence, seemingly indefatigable strength, and military genius are legend. True, Alexander was widely regarded as supernatural. His person was the wellspring of his legitimacy. Yet, close analysis of Alexander's battles reveals a discernible and at the same time remarkable pattern. Like Nelson, Alexander prepared his warriors for battle. His actual role in battle was to afford direction and assessment, not to fight at the front of his troops. On the day of battle, Alexander selected the time and place of the attack. That done, the theater cavalry, infantry, and supporting forces commanders undertook the tactical actions.⁵⁰ Thus did the charismatic leader provide the vision of the battlespace; he seldom led individual engagements.

The parallel to Nelson's role at Trafalgar is noteworthy. Nelson's death during the battle in no way diminished the competency with which his captains and their crews fought. Nelson's subordinates shared his sense of vision, and were empowered to conduct operations. Pre-battle meetings with his officers built consensus and facilitated sharing of the vision. Much was left unsaid: Nelson's officers knew intuitively what he wanted done. Preternaturalism as well as the unshakable emotional bond between leaders and led are integral parts of the Nelson legend.

The illustration is now prosaic, but the connotation profound. Combat leaders should be both operators as well as builders of forces, functions entailing vision, communication,

and empowerment, which are the cornerstones of charismatic and transformational leadership theory.

More recent examples of charismatic military and combat leaders furnish additional information about the interpersonal dynamics involved. Studies of Patton suggest that, although he was not especially visionary, he had excellent staff officers who provided that component. MacArthur, perhaps the foremost charismatic combat leader, maintained a powerful emotional tie to many of his subordinates. During the Second World War when MacArthur commanded U.S. forces in the Southwest Pacific, his component commanders were disposed to referring to their forces as "MacArthur's forces" rather than those of their own Services. Serving the charismatic combat leader often supplanted respective Service positions.⁵¹ On this score, General George Marshall, no friend of MacArthur, but a reserved man never given to hyperbole, asserted that MacArthur did not have a staff, rather a court.

Official "Europe first" policy during the war notwithstanding, the United States focused around half of its overall war effort in the Pacific. Some historians have argued that MacArthur had a great deal to do with this apparent disparity between declaratory and operational policy.⁵² Many average Americans regarded MacArthur as the one to lead the attack on Japan in an effort to avenge the latter's atrocities, a popular perception MacArthur nurtured. Once MacArthur left the Philippines in 1942, he had no real authority to continue to act as commander outside of his former area of operations. Yet he did. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN, U.S. Pacific Command, acquiesced in MacArthur's self-proclaimed role as "czar" for the Southwest Pacific because: (1) the only other serious choices were that MacArthur would serve in Europe, Washington, or would run for President; and (2), this would ensure that Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations, and General Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, would pay attention to the Pacific.⁵³ MacArthur thus virtually forced the Navy, the Joint Chiefs, and the Administration to make major strategic-level decisions they otherwise might not have.

This is one of several conspicuous cases on offer where charismatic military personalities have proven difficult to handle. Is MacArthur the type of officer political and military officials wish to see in a leadership position? On the other hand, how can the military discourage future MacArthurs yet still retain the warrior ethos?

The eminent military historian Martin van Creveld has noted that some famous charismatic warriors had a personal "dark side." Julius Caesar was known as "the bald fornicator." Napoleon cheated at cards. Nelson's private life almost beggared description. MacArthur was notoriously vindictive and seems to

have labored under a persecution complex. Van Creveld concludes that even military genius such as theirs was of itself insufficient to ensure victory in combat.⁵⁴ Whether a charismatic leader will necessarily bring a "dark side" to command is not certain, although this seems likely.

Studies of effective naval combat leaders during World War II disclose an evident lack of charisma. Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, for example, was one of the best known and successful combat leaders of the Pacific war. Spruance was the key leader at the Battle of Midway (June 1942) and led the thrust through the Central Pacific culminating in the Battle of the Philippine Sea (June 1944). Spruance's biography entitled *The Quiet Warrior*⁵⁵ depicts Spruance as an dogged warrior but also as an intensely private individual, unconcerned with image, oblivious to his portrayal in history. Spruance was no charismatic leader.

Another absorbing case is that of Vice Admiral Willis A. "Ching" Lee, USN.⁵⁶ Lee also was an effective combat leader in the Pacific theater of World War II. Commanding the fast battleships during most major engagements, he was an innovative thinker, determining for instance how to employ radar most productively in combat. Lee was scarcely a charismatic or pugnacious warrior: he is usually described as a scientist in uniform. His area of expertise before the war was tactics, especially the use of gunnery against aircraft. Following the Battle of Leyte Gulf in 1944, he returned to the U.S. to direct work on defenses against kamikaze attacks. His organization eventually grew into the Operational Test and Evaluation Force (OPTEVFOR).

What then of Admiral Halsey? Halsey is one of our most successful combat leaders in the Navy. In contrast to Spruance, quiet, deep-thinking, always in control, Halsey was loud, impetuous, and flamboyant. Although these traits and behaviors were shared with General Patton, by themselves, they are not evidence of charisma. Halsey was not revered by his troops as being near "god-like." His decisions were not viewed as infallible at the time. Halsey is perhaps most remembered in history for falling for a Japanese trap at the Battle of Leyte Gulf (October 1944), based upon the correct Japanese understanding of his personality.

Halsey could not pass up an opportunity to go after the Japanese aircraft carriers in an action that blemished an otherwise superb war record. For their part, the Japanese strongly suspected Halsey could not resist an opportunity to sink the Japanese fleet, avoiding Spruance's "mistake" of allowing the Japanese to "get away" at the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Halsey's preoccupation with the offensive and the decisive battle nearly cost the U.S. the entire invasion force which was left only lightly defended.

Halsey seemed most concerned with the probabilities of what the enemy would do.⁵⁷ Spruance wanted to know enemy capabilities. Spruance had a sense of vision; Halsey did not. Was Halsey a charismatic leader or merely loud, impetuous, and flamboyant? Who was the better combat leader--Halsey or Spruance? Which model should one choose to replicate?

Here one might offer a few common-sense observations. Vision and insight, indispensable aspects of charismatic leadership, are facets of good leadership more generally. Vision and insight are good indicators of the ability to conceptualize. Attempting to articulate the notion of vision for the combat officer, a retired U.S. Army general suggests that meeting the challenges of operational and tactical combat requires both insight and the mastery of execution. Insight derives from a willful receptiveness to a variety of stimuli, from intellectual curiosity (although intellect itself does not guarantee insight), from observation and reflection, from continuous evaluation and testing, from conversations and discussions, from review of assumptions, from listening to the views of outsiders, from a study of history, and from the indispensable ingredient of humility. Obstacles to insight are many: one's own propaganda, accepting the conventional wisdom, superficial thinking, blindness to reality, self-satisfaction, complacency, and arrogance.⁵⁸

By way of example, the U.S. Army conducted a study of the proficiency of combat leadership in the tactical sphere during World War II.⁵⁹ In this study, the authors compare the effectiveness of twenty-four representative divisions in the European theater--twelve German, five British, and seven American. Using comparative techniques, they rate these divisions in order of battlefield effectiveness, selecting the top-rated ten divisions for further analysis. Nine of the top ten divisions were German,⁶⁰ with the only non-German division being the 88th Infantry Division of the U.S. Army. The 88th Infantry Division was commanded by a non-descript, non-charismatic group of leaders and the division itself had been formed "from scratch" when mobilization began. The 88th Division's success has been attributed in part to good training, but above all to leaders who were with the group from the start and had a vision of what a good division would look like before it went into combat.⁶¹

The essential element the U.S. Army found in each of these top-rated divisions in the European theater was the overall superior quality of the division's leadership. These leaders showed:⁶² (1), a great capacity for independent action; (2), a determination to adhere to the mission, that is, a moral obligation to act at all times in the spirit of the assigned mission; (3), avoidance of a fixed pattern of action; (4), the ability to make clear and unambiguous decisions; (5), the ability

to establish a definite point of main effort; and (6), a constant concern for the welfare of their troops and the preservation of combat efficiency.⁶³ These are simply good principles of leadership. The study presents little evidence of charisma, although one should allow that some of the German general officers might have been perceived as charismatic by their troops.⁶⁴

Charismatic combat leadership warrants future study. If analysts are correct about the types of wars that will become more prevalent in the future, in all likelihood U.S. armed forces will increasingly face non-traditional forces, including militias, guerrillas and terrorists. New enemies require new thinking and non-traditional operations require fresh leadership techniques.⁶⁵ Hence, the importance of understanding such things as charismatic and transformational leadership.

Conclusion

The meaning of the term "charisma" varies in the literature and its connotations differ considerably. A common premise of most theories of charisma is that followers, not leaders, are the chief determinants of charisma's existence. Here we have stipulated that charismatic leadership entails an interpersonal relationship defined by the follower in which the leader is thought to have an extraordinary, even a preternatural status. Ideas and orders of the leader are accepted without question merely because they were issued by the leader (not his office), and an emotional bond, approaching the irrational and not mandated by law, is extant between follower and leader. Most charismatic leaders appear to emerge from crises, suggesting they are major agents of change. And charisma may coexist, however uneasily, with traditional and rational/legal authority.

Although charismatic leadership continues to be worthy of study, one should bear in mind that the value of a truly charismatic leader to an organization is mixed. The record of charismatic combat leaders is in fact dubious: their actual contributions have been inflated with the passage of time. Often charismatic combat leaders have caused great difficulties for the governments they served. Many military officers who cannot reasonably be described as charismatic were simply good leaders who served their country well in time of war. One would be hard-pressed to make the case from a review of the literature that charismatic military leadership is opportune, either in a combat or non-combat environment. If anything, the evidence indicates that charismatic leaders are more trouble than they are worth.

Recent scholarly research has developed the concept of transformational leadership, whose chief goal is the empowerment of followers to execute a vision but which differs significantly

from charismatic leadership. Key to transformational leadership isn't only the followers' belief in the leader, but the trust the latter harbors for the former as well. The business world has shown a growing interest in transformational leadership and some companies have already begun to groom future leaders accordingly, acknowledging that transformational leadership qualities at the senior level are expedient and can be improved. In order to cultivate the proper characteristics from a group of colonels/captains, who are primarily left brain thinkers and enjoyed their "ESTJ" status, organizations should take positive action in the form of selection, promotion, and training. Charismatic traits are worthy of investigation in leadership studies, but true charisma in practice is unnecessary and, in fact, undesirable.

Notes

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4. David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 302-3.
5. Ibid.
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17. Robert J. House, James Woycke, and Eugene M. Fodor, "Charismatic and Noncharismatic Leaders: Differences in Behavior and Effectiveness," *Charismatic Leadership: The Elusive Factor in Organizational Effectiveness*, Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo, and Associates, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989, p. 117. This conclusion was endorsed by the primary authors of this book. See Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo, "Training Charismatic Leadership: A Risky and Critical Task," *Charismatic Leadership: The Elusive Factor in Organizational Effectiveness*, Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo, and Associates, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989, p. 309-323.

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58. Lieutenant General John H. Cushman, USA (Ret.), "Challenge and Response at the Operational Levels, 1914-45," *Military Effectiveness*, Volume III: The Second World War, Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, eds., Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin for the Mershon Center, The Ohio State University, 1988, p. 324, 334.
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60. Thus reinforcing the point that models of success at the tactical-level of warfare do not necessarily result in success in campaigns or war.
61. As suggested in a letter to James Tritten from Dr. T. Owen Jacobs, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, February 14, 1995.
62. Lieutenant General John H. Cushman, USA (Ret.), "Challenge and Response at the Operational Levels, 1914-45," *Military Effectiveness*, Volume III: The Second World War, Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, eds., Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin for the Mershon Center, The Ohio State University, 1988. p. 326-330.
63. On this last point, see also: *Generaloberst Franz Halder, et. al., Analysis of U.S. Army Field Service Regulations*, Historical Division, United States Army, Europe, 1953, p. 7

64. For a study of Wehrmacht general officers, see: Correlli Barnett, ed., *Hitler's General's*, New York, NY: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989.

65. Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991, p. 197.

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