DEVELOPING AIR FORCE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP – A CAREER LONG PROCESS

A Monograph
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How should the Air Force encourage and develop future strategic leaders? The Air Force should remove the current impediments to early strategic leader development and pursue career long engagement with a focus on tools like social media to help rebuild the mentoring and self-education program. The thinking skills associated with strategic leadership are unique. Strategic thinking skills take time to develop and mature. Past literature provides narrow recommendations for encouraging and developing future strategic leaders without looking at the problem systemically. It takes career long engagement to encourage and develop future strategic leaders. While changes to the assignment system and education system provide opportunities to develop breadth and strategic thinking skills, less emphasis on below primary zone promotions is vital to enable future strategic leaders the time to pursue these opportunities. One area for increased study is the use of social media. Social media have the ability to encourage young officers, provides a framework for career long mentoring and can influence strategic leader development in both mentee and mentors.

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Abstract

DEVELOPING AIR FORCE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP – A CAREER LONG PROCESS by Lt Col Kevin A. Cabanas, United States Air Force, 49 pages.

With a challenging future of decreasing budgets, potential peer competitors, and continued global terrorism, the Air Force needs strategic leadership, like the original airpower enthusiasts, to generate new strategies and maximize airpower contributions to national security. The Air Force needs to encourage and develop these future strategic leaders.

How should the Air Force encourage and develop future strategic leaders? The Air Force should remove the current impediments to early strategic leader development and pursue career long engagement with a focus on tools like social media to help rebuild the mentoring and self-education program. The thinking skills associated with strategic leadership are unique. Strategic thinking skills take time to develop and mature. Past literature provides narrow recommendations for encouraging and developing future strategic leaders without looking at the problem systemically. It takes career long engagement to encourage and develop future strategic leaders. While changes to the assignment system and education system provide opportunities to develop breadth and strategic thinking skills, less emphasis on below primary zone promotions is vital to enable future strategic leaders the time to pursue these opportunities. One area for increased study is the use of social media. Social media have the ability to encourage young officers, provides a framework for career long mentoring and can influence strategic leader development in both mentee and mentors.

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Introduction

If we should have to fight, we should be prepared to do so from the neck up instead of from the neck down.[1] General James H. Doolittle

The technology of the twentieth century and the strategic leadership of early airpower enthusiasts spawned the creation of the United States Air Force. Early strategic leaders like General William "Billy" Mitchell envisioned airpower as a force to avoid the stalemate and war of attrition experienced during World War I.[2] His thoughts, propelled by other strategic leaders like General Henry "Hap" Arnold, matured into the concept of strategic bombing.[3] The rapid buildup of airpower and the success of strategic bombing during World War II fostered Air Force strategic leadership that considered themselves "doers," not thinkers. These doers, bomber pilots like General Curtis LeMay, felt the vast operational experience of World War II provided them sufficient development to conduct strategic leadership.[4] The bomber generals led the massive effort to create and expand Strategic Air Command (SAC) as a strategic deterrent to the Soviet Union. While SAC served a valuable strategic effort, these bomber generals struggled with the political constraints imposed during limited wars in Korea and Vietnam.[5] Following Vietnam, strategic leadership in the Air Force shifted from the bomber pilots to the fighter pilots.[6] The fighter generals masterminded airpower's contributions to Operation DESERT STORM and

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[1] United States Air Force, *Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1*: *Leadership and Force Development (*Washington DC, November 8, 2011), 47.

[2] Mark A. Clodfelter, "Molding Airpower Convictions: Development and Legacy of William Mitchell's Strategic Thought," in *The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory*, ed. Phillips S. Meilinger (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 1997), 90.

[3] Peter R. Faber, "Interwar US Army Aviation and the Air Corps Tactical School: Incubators of American Power," in *The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory*, ed. Phillips S. Meilinger (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 1997), 224-225.

[4] Mike Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals: The Problem of Air Force Leadership1945-1982* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 1998), 16.

[5] Ibid., 43-44.

[6] Ibid., 237.

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. However, these fighter generals were hesitant to support remotely piloted aircraft (RPA).[7]

While the bomber generals kept America safe during the Cold War and the fighter generals rapidly took apart opposing ground forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, future Air Force strategic leaders face looming budget cuts, a long war against Islamic extremists, and the continued rise of China as a potential peer competitor. The next generation of technologically advanced aircraft systems, designed to counter the anti-access/area denial capabilities of China and Iran, place strain on an already tightening budget.[8] The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War and continued fighting in Afghanistan after more than 10 years demonstrate that advanced technologies do not guarantee strategic victory.[9] In such a challenging environment, the Air Force needs strategic leadership, like the original airpower enthusiasts, to generate new strategies and maximize airpower contributions to national security. The Air Force needs to encourage and develop these future strategic leaders.

How should the Air Force encourage and develop future strategic leaders? The Air Force should remove the current impediments to early strategic leader development and pursue career long engagement with a focus on tools like social media to help rebuild the mentoring and self-education program. The thinking skills associated with strategic leadership are unique. Strategic

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[7] Robert M. Gates, "Secretary Gates Remarks at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base," (remarks at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, Montgomery, AL, April 21, 2008), http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4214 (Accessed February 15, 2012). Secretary Gates describes Air Force resistance to co-fund RPAs with Central Intelligence Agency in 1992. He also notes continued service resistance to building additional RPA capacity to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[8] David W. Barno, Nora Bensahel, and Travis Harp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, (Washington DC: Center for New American Security, October 2011), http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_HardChoices_BarnoBensahelSharp_0.pdf (accessed February 15, 2012). By reducing the purchase of F-35s and other procurement, the report highlights ways to maintain acceptable risk and still implement the 2012 defense strategy. Additional cuts provide more savings, but with a commensurate increase in risk.

[9] William M. Arkin, *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2007), 54.

thinking skills take time to develop and mature. In addition, strategic leadership encouragement and development faces opposition from an Air Force culture deeply linked to technology and historically built on leadership homogeneity. The *Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1-1 Leadership and Force Development* process relies on training, education, and experience combined with mentoring to develop strategic leaders.[10] This approach is similar to the leadership development process of other services and has the components for success, but it is not sufficient and out of balance.

This monograph examines Air Force strategic leadership development. Section One will start by defining strategic leadership. Section Two will review literature related to Air Force strategic leadership development. The literature review will highlight a technologically focused Air Force culture with a historical trend of leadership homogeneity. Section Three will review the current strategic leadership development process. Section Four will analyze limitations of the current development process. A typical rated officer's career path provides limited time for early development through broadening or education. The typical career path also highlights the episodic nature of education. *AFDD 1-1* anticipates mentoring and self-education to smooth out gaps between education opportunities and to overcome the early training focus, but the lack of framework and incentives limits actual mentoring and self-education. In addition, Section Four will contend that given a historical trend of senior leader homogeneity, current promotion practices minimize time for broadening, creating an additional impediment to strategic leadership development, both early and later in an officer's career.

Past literature recommends changes to the assignment system, education system, and promotion system to provide incentives and to encourage development of breadth. However, the past literature does not adequately address how the current promotion system limits the implementation of these recommendations. Section Five will propose changes to the strategic

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[10] *AFDD 1-1*, November 8, 2011, Foreword.

leadership development process. One area for increased study is the use of social media. Social media could help improve the current process in all areas. Social media has the ability to encourage young officers, provides a framework for career long mentoring, and can influence strategic leader development in both the mentee and the mentor.

Defining Strategic Leadership

To start, it is necessary to define strategic leadership. In an article in *Air & Space Power Journal*, Colonel W. Michael Guillot notes "The only thing harder than being a strategic leader is trying to define the entire scope of strategic leadership-a broad, difficult concept."[11] Clausewitz states war is an instrument of policy and that prior to entering into a war the statesman and commander must ensure they understand what type of war they are entering and that this judgment is the supreme act of the statesman and commander. It is "the first of the strategic questions and the most comprehensive."[12] The commander exercising this judgment is practicing strategic leadership. In the preface of *Strategic Leadership: The General's Art,* Mark Grandstaff and Georgia Sorenson note the following about strategic leadership.

> Although most officers have been trained to think through problems at a tactical level, few know how to embrace the more nebulous world of strategic thought where things are tenuous and not susceptible to easy answers. Such thinking often has little to do with current crises, but focuses on understanding long-term processes in an all-encompassing context. In short, strategic thinkers deal with problems that are much wider in scope, more intertwined with other problems, laden with ethical dilemmas, and that sometimes must be managed rather than solved.[13]

Senior Air Force officers who interact with civilian Department of Defense leadership execute strategic leadership. Strategic leadership requires military leaders to provide civilian leaders with not only military options for advancing national interests, but also the risks

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[11] Michael Guillot, "Strategic Leadership: Defining the Challenge," *Air & Space Power Journal* XVII, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 67.

[12] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 88-89.

[13] Mark R. Grandstaff and Georgia Sorenson, eds., *Strategic Leadership: The General's Art* (Vienna: Management Concepts, 2009), xxiii-xxiv.

associated with executing those options. Strategic leadership requires Air Force senior leaders to look past today's wars and to build a force and culture prepared or able to adapt to fight and win tomorrow's war. Grandstaff and Sorenson state "In today's fast-paced society, strategic leaders need to scan the environment, anticipate change proactively, develop a vision of their organization's future, align the organization's culture with their vision, understand other cultures, and negotiate across a wide breadth of stake-holders."[14]

In one of his three articles on leadership, Major General Stephen R. Lorenz remarked on the general lack of time, money, and manpower in Air Force organizations.[15] Strategic leadership entails balancing time, money, and manpower to execute the Air Force mission. In an ends, ways, and means construct, "Since the aim of strategy is to link ends, ways and means, the aim of strategic leadership is to determine the ends, choose the best ways, and apply the most effective means."[16] *AFDD 1-1* notes "Strategic leaders apply organizational competencies to establish structure and articulate strategic vision."[17] *AFDD1-1* also states "Strategic vision focuses on the effects an Airman can have across a major command, a theater, the Air Force, or even other services of the Department of Defense."[18]

In "Keeping the Strategic Flame Alive," Carl Builder highlights two examples of airpower related strategic leadership. First is the use of airpower to overcome the Soviet blockade of Berlin in 1948. While mostly viewed as a tactical or operational level success, the use of airpower to overcome the Soviet land blockade completely altered the crisis at the strategic level. The Soviets blockaded the land routes into Berlin with the strategy that the United States and the

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[14] Ibid., xxvi.

[15] Stephen R. Lorenz, "Lorenz on Leadership," *Air & Space Power Journal* XIX, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 5.

[16] Guillot, 68.

[17] *AFDD 1-1*, November 8, 2011, 57.

[18] Ibid., 32.

West would have to initiate hostilities to break through and resupply Berlin. Much like early airpower, critics failed to consider how airpower could alter warfare. The Soviets never considered the use of airpower to resupply Berlin. The air bridge shifted the initiative from the Soviets back to the United States and put the Soviets in the position of having to initiate hostilities in order to break the air bridge.[19]

Second was the public release of aerial reconnaissance photographs during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The public release of the aerial photographs, unheard of during that time, clearly showed a military build-up in Cuba. The release helped shift the discussion away from what the Soviets were doing in Cuba to the discussion about what to do about it.[20] Both of these examples highlight the potential role of Air Force strategic leadership, especially since airpower is fundamentally different from and more flexible than other forms of military power. Future Air Force strategic leaders should highlight and advocate ways that airpower, and now space and cyber power, can provide civilian leadership with new options in pursuit of national security, much the same way the early airpower enthusiasts did with strategic bombing.[21]

While the above examples portray the variations in the definition of strategic leadership, this monograph equates strategic leadership with the concept of strategic vision in *AFDD 1-1*. In describing strategic vision, *AFDD 1-1* provides the following example, which best defines strategic leadership for this monograph.

> As leaders advance into the most complex and highest levels of the Air Force or become involved in the strategic arena, the ability to conceptualize and integrate becomes increasingly important. Leaders at this level focus on establishing the fundamental

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[19] Carl H. Builder, "Keeping the Strategic Flame," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 34 (Spring 2003): 53.

[20] Ibid., 79-80.

[21] United States Air Force, *Air Force Doctrine Document 1: Air Force Basic Organization, and Command (*Washington DC, October 14, 2011), 11. AFDD 1 defines airpower as " the ability to project military power or influence through the control and exploitation of air, space, and cyberspace to achieve strategic, operational, or tactical objectives."

conditions for operations to deter wars, fight wars, or conduct operations other than war. They also create organizational structures needed to deal with the future requirements.[22]

Literature Review

With a definition of strategic leadership in place, Section Two will review past literature related to development of Air Force strategic leadership. The literature review will focus on recent literature that allows for comparison with today's rated officer career path. The literature review will highlight an Air Force culture that is technologically and functionally focused and prone to leadership homogeneity. The literature review will also note the past recommendations for changes to the assignment system, education system, and promotion system.

In *The Icarus Syndrome*, Carl H. Builder highlights an Air Force institution at odds with itself. The book, published in 1993 and sponsored by the Air Force, describes how the abandonment of airpower theory caused a shift in Air Force values away from the mission and towards functional and technical specialties.[23] "Once unified under a theory of air power, the Air Force had, in the space of a little more than a decade become a collection of object- and process-oriented factions under the management of the airplane pilots and operators."[24] Builder states this shift in Air Force culture occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. He stresses the importance of strategic leadership to unify and create a shared vision for the institution. He recommends an updated airpower theory with associated mission and vision statements as an essential element to rebuilding Air Force culture.[25] The following quote, part of a letter Builder authored to the Air University President at the time, summarizes his thoughts.

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[22] *AFDD 1-1*, November 8, 2011, 35.

[23] The Air Force originally used the term 'air power' but has since shifted to 'airpower.' This monograph utilizes the Air Force terminology of airpower used in current Air Force doctrine.

[24] Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1993), 200.

[25] Ibid., 230-31.

As you indicated, air power is one piece, the profession of arms is the other. One is the heart of the Air Force, the other is its soul. The senior leadership of the Air Force is the trustee of the heart; but everyone in the Air Force is a trustee of its soul. The heart is about organizational purpose or mission-air power-and the soul is about the profession of arms…The problem, as I see it, is that the two-heart and soul-have failed each other. The senior leadership has failed to keep the heart-the mission of air power-alive and vibrant by keeping it at the forefront of all its actions. And without that mission, the members of the Air Force have had nothing to commit themselves to except their own careers or specialties.[26]

In 1998, shortly after *The Icarus Syndrome*, Colonel Mike Worden authored *Rise of the Fighter Generals – The Problem of Air Force Leadership 1945 – 1982*. Colonel Worden details the Air Force trend of senior leadership homogeneity and the risks associated with a homogenous senior leadership corps. He asserts that without adequate breadth and experience, the Air Force as an organization is more prone to parochialism, myopia and monistic thinking.[27] Besides providing a historical record of trends in Air Force strategic leadership, he argues "that broad education and experience and a diversity of views at the senior executive level are necessary to cultivate visionary leaders."[28]

In 2000, due to many of the issues described by Builder and Colonel Worden, then Chief of Staff of the Air Force General Michael E. Ryan implemented the Developing Aerospace Leaders (DAL). General Ryan's intent for DAL was to ensure the Air Force developed the right qualities in its future leaders.[29] The initiative generated multiple works related to the development of Air Force strategic leadership.

Dr. James Smith published "Expeditionary Leaders, CINCs, and Chairman – Shaping Air Force Officers for Leadership Roles in the Twenty-First Century". Dr. Smith, part of General Ryan's DAL initiative team, reviews the stovepiped career-and-assignment structure. The

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[26] Ibid., xvii.

[27] Worden, 238.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Mike Thirttle, "Developing Aerospace Leaders for the Twenty-First Century," *Air & Space Power Journal* XV, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 54-56.

analysis notes the importance of a deliberate, career long process. Dr. Smith also argues for changes to the education system, with more focus on strategy.[30]

In "Air Force Leadership Development – Transformation's Constant," Colonel James Browne argues for career broadening as well. He uses a transformational context to create a leadership development model. The model stresses the importance of depth, breadth and vision in strategic leaders. Colonel Browne asserts that to progress up the leadership chain, a leader must have the proper balance of depth, breadth and vision. [31]

With the emergence of DAL, two National Defense Fellows at RAND published articles related to strategic leadership development. The first, by Lieutenant Colonel David A. French, provides a detailed analysis of mentoring in "Leadership Development – A Supervisory Responsibility." He finds the current system lacking. "While there have been some truly great leaders in Air Force history, they appear to have emerged more from informal mentoring, innate abilities or sheer willpower more than from a coherent development program."[32] He notes the importance of assignments in leadership development but highlights limitations given current Air Force culture. "As a result, strong functional stovepipes control both short-term officer career decisions and long-term development."[33]

The second, by Lieutenant Colonel Nancy Weaver, articulates similar concerns as Lieutenant Colonel French. "While the Air Force has produced some truly outstanding leaders,

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[30] James R. Smith, "Expeditionary Leaders, CINCs, and Chairmen: Shaping Air Force Officers for Leadership Roles in the Twenty-First Century," *Aerospace Power Journal* XIV, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 33.

[31] James S. Browne, "Air Force Leadership Development: Transformation's Constant" (Research Report, Air University, 2003), 45, http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA424682 (accessed July 20,2011).

[32] David A. French, "Leadership Development: A Supervisory Responsibility" (Research Report, Project Air Force, 2000), 36, http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA393960 (accessed November 9, 2011).

[33] Ibid., 36 & 44.

they appear to have emerged serendipitously rather than from deliberate development."[34] Lieutenant Colonel Weaver voices concerns about the functional stovepipes in leadership development. "Instead of traditional occupational stovepipes that have dominated officer professional development in recent years, airmen must first identify with and be able to articulate the unique capabilities the Air Force brings to the complex joint equation; and at the same time preserve and foster aerospace power."[35] Lieutenant Colonel Weaver advocates development of leadership doctrine, increased use of feedback tools, and changes to the personnel system, assignments, and promotions.[36]

Around the same time frame, Dr. Mike Thirtle, a RAND consultant and Air Force Reserve officer, published "Developing Aerospace Leaders" in Air Force's *Aerospace Power Journal*. He notes the Air Force's technological focus. "As opposed to the other military services that have identified themselves with a mission, the Air Force has identified itself with technology and has subsequently become more associated with a specific type (the airplane)."[37] He states this has contributed to the "turbulent nature of the Air Force culture."[38]

Shortly after Dr. Thirlte, Colonel W. Michael Guillot published "Strategic Leadership – Defining the Challenge" in the renamed *Air & Space Power Journal*. While the work focuses on defining strategic leadership, Colonel Guillot notes the different thinking skills required by strategic leaders. "Skills for leading at the strategic level are more complex than those for leading at the tactical and operational levels, with skills blurring at the seams between those levels."[39] He

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[34] Nancy E. Weaver, "Developing Aerospace Leaders for the Twenty-First Century" (Research Report, Project Air Force, 2001), 45, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/au/weaver.pdf (accessed August 22, 2011).

[35] Ibid., 48.

[36] Ibid., 56.

[37] Thirtle, 55.

[38] Ibid., 56.

[39] Guillot, 68.

believes strategic leaders must "develop a broad frame of reference or perspective and think conceptually."[40] He describes a path to developing a strategic leader that relies foremost on values, ethics, codes, morals and standards. The path relies on a career long building process, to include mentoring, self-learning and broadening assignments. [41] The approach is similar to a pyramid, as shown in Figure 1, with the bottom layer of the pyramid composed of values, ethics, codes, morals and standards.

Figure 1[42]

Air University is the home to Air Force officer Professional Military Education (PME), to include Air War College (AWC), Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), Squadron Officer School (SOS), and School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS). During his thirty years of time as a military and then civilian professor at the Air University, Colonel Dennis M. Drew published multiple works related to airpower and developing strategic leaders. *Recapitalizing the Air Force Intellect- Essays on War, Airpower, and Military Education* is a compilation of his essays on the topic. As a stage setter he notes, "Former Air Force chief of staff Gen Michael Dugan once commented to me that the Air Force is producing a generation of illiterate truck

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[40] Ibid., 72.

[41] Ibid., 78.

[42] Ibid., 73.

drivers."[43] Colonel Drew contends that intellectual recapitalization of the Air Force is equal in importance to the recapitalization of the Air Force fleet of aircraft. He states, "Technological fascination is not limited to Airmen, of course, but Airmen have raised that fascination to the status of a fetish, often to the exclusion of fundamental military thinking that could probably inform them about the employment of airpower above the tactical level."[44]

He contends the Air Force development system is inadequate.[45] Colonel Drew places heavy emphasis on education and breaks it into three parts: self-education, formal academic education, and formal PME. He argues Air Force efforts at promoting self-education are largely ineffective due to a lack of rewards, benefits or recognition. Colonel Drew contends that formal PME, in the form of intermediate development and senior development education, is unable to offset the lack of self-education and academic education that is unrelated to airpower or strategy. He recommends three things to help solve the problem. First, promote relevant graduate level academic education programs. Second, reemphasize career-long self-education through changes to promotion and personnel policies. Third, upgrade PME in the form of increased quality of instructors, refined curriculum and formal entrance requirements.[46]

A more recent 2010 article, authored predominantly by ACSC Vice Deans and professors, argues the lack of strategic thinking in the Air Force is worse than ever, despite the implementation of DAL.[47] "Developing Air Force Strategists – Change Culture, Reverse Careerism" contends the current Air Force promotion system creates leaders with a whole tour

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[43] Drew, Dennis M,. *Recapitalizing the Air Force Intellect: Essays on War, Airpowers and Military Education* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2008), 211, http://aupress.au.af.mil/digital/pdf/paper/fp_0014_drew_recapitalizing_intellect.pdf (accessed July 21, 2011).

[44] Ibid., xiii.

[45] Ibid., 211.

[46] Ibid., 219.

[47] Scott A. Bethel, Aaron Prupas, Tomislav Z. Ruby and Michael V. Smith, "Developing Air Force Strategists: Change Culture, Reverse Careerism," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 58 (July 2010): 83.

(three years) less experience than the officers from 2000.[48] The authors also note the difference between thinking at the tactical vice strategic level.[49] The article highlights the homogeneity of senior Air Force leaders and recommends changes to the assignment and promotion system to increase breadth in future strategic leaders.[50]

The literature review highlights multiple recommendations for changes to the Air Force assignment system, education system, and promotion system to improve development of strategic leaders. Even with the Air Force's institutionalization of DAL into a force development division, the recently published "Developing Air Force Strategists – Change Culture, Reverse Careerism" highlights an Air Force culture focused on technology and an institution with a historical trend of senior leadership homogeneity. The current development system does not take into account these continued concerns. The current system assumes there is proper balance between training, education, and experience to develop strategic leaders.

Current Leadership and Force Development System

AFDD 1-1 provides the Air Force doctrine for leadership and force development. The Air Force updated *AFDD 1-1* in November of 2011. The previous version, published in 2006, focused on development at the different levels of leadership: tactical, operational and strategic. Each level built upon the last to develop strategic leaders.[51] "The seeds of leadership that were planted during tactical skills development and matured into operational-level capabilities should bear fruit at the strategic level."[52] The 2011 version renamed these levels tactical expertise, operational competence, and strategic vision. The 2011 version focuses less on the levels as building blocks

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[48] Ibid., 84

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 86-88

[51] United States Air Force, *Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1*: *Leadership and Force Development (*Washington DC, February 18, 2006), 14.

[52] Ibid., 18.

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and more on the levels as a way to categorize the type of leadership skills required for that particular level.[53] *AFDD 1-1* refers to these skills as institutional competencies. Figure 2 provides an overview of the levels and the institutional competencies.
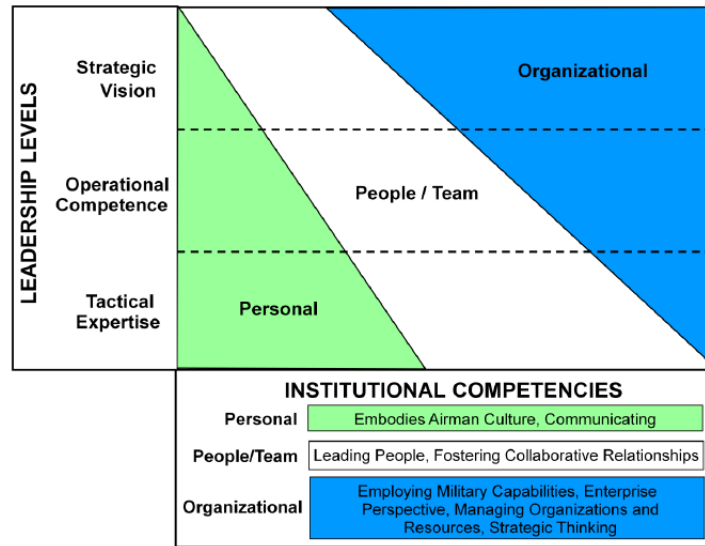

Figure 2[54]

AFDD 1-1 states the Air Force core values are the foundation for leadership. Edgar F. Puryear, a noted author on military leadership, fully develops this premise in *American Generalship*[55] and *Stars in Flight*.[56] Character is the foundation for leadership, but as *AFDD 1-1* notes, "Leadership is a skill that we learn, develop, and practice; it is not necessarily inherited nor ingrained in our DNA."[57] With a foundation built on character, the Air Force relies on education, training, and experience to develop leaders. *AFDD 1-1* states "The deliberate process of

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[53] *AFDD 1-1*, November 8, 2011, 27-28.

[54] Ibid., 27.

[55] Edgar F. Puryear Jr., *American Generalship* (New York: Presidio Press, 2000), 360-361.

[56] Edgar F. Puryear Jr., *Stars in Flight* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1981), 228-229.

[57] *AFDD 1-1*, November 8, 2011, Foreword.

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combining education, training, and experience to produce the right expertise and competence to meet the Air Force's operational needs is the key element of developing an Airman."[58]

Training develops individual skill expertise, such as flying an aircraft or learning to shoot a weapon. Education develops critical thinking and creative problem solving skills. It helps leaders deal with unpredictable situations. Examples of education include PME at SOS, ACSC, and AWC. *AFDD 1-1* describes experience as "where the synthesis of education and training occurs."[59] *AFDD 1-1* stresses a continuum of learning in education, training, and experience to develop the requisite institutional competencies needed at the different leadership levels.[60] "Preparation to fulfill the role of an Air Force officer is a continual development process. Air Force officers are raised with an Airman's perspective and grown in the culture of the service."[61]

The tactical expertise level focuses on personal competencies, developing those technical skills required to operate as technicians and specialists. These skills include flying an aircraft or defending a base's cyber infrastructure. With minimal experiences to build on, training and education are the primary methods to develop tactical expertise.[62]

Following tactical expertise is operational competence. *AFDD 1-1* notes "This is the level where an Air Force member transitions from being a specialist to understanding Air Force operational capabilities."[63] Airmen rely on a balance of institutional competencies at this level. Education, training, and experience all help develop these competencies.

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[58] Ibid., 39.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., 37.

[61] Ibid., 4.

[62] Ibid., 28.

[63] Ibid., 29.

The next step above operational competency is strategic vision. This level equates to strategic leadership. *AFDD 1-1* notes the transition in leadership from the individual and people to the organization.

> The Airmen with strategic vision has an enterprise perspective, with a comprehension of the structure and relationships in the overall enterprise with which he or she is involved. This perspective requires an awareness of the processes of our government and of the global, regional, and cultural issues surrounding a given mission. Strategic thinking is imperative at this level, emphasizing the need for a broad vision and adaptability to circumstance for which earlier challenges in his or her career have prepared the Airman.[64]

AFDD 1-1 further notes these leaders require strategic comprehension and competence as well as broad perspectives. Education, training, and experience all help develop "accurate frames of reference, make sound decisions, uncover underlying connections to deal with more challenging issues, and engage in creative, innovative thinking that recognizes new solutions and new options."[65] The Air Force development process stresses education as the main component for development at this level.[66] Other forms of education, experience and training that develop strategic vision include assignments, war games, self-development and mentoring. The foreword by General Schwartz notes the importance of mentoring to bind the different elements of development together. In addition, the idea of self-education is part of the very first competency in Figure 2, "Embodies Airman culture."[67] This self-education entails a continual increase in breadth and depth of knowledge and skills.[68]

AFDD 1-1 defines the four organizational competencies of strategic vision as employing military capabilities, enterprise perspective, managing organizations and resources, and strategic thinking. While the first three are generally analytical and prescriptive in nature, strategic

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[64] Ibid., 32.

[65] Ibid., 33.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 53.

[68] Ibid., 55.

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thinking is about synthesis and the ability to understand problems from different perspectives. *AFDD 1-1* breaks strategic thinking into the sub-components of vision, decision-making, and adaptability.[69] Strategic thinking allows strategic leaders to overcome uncertainly and ambiguity at the strategic level to set their sights on a long-term vision and continually nudge the Air Force in the direction of that vision. As the environment changes or the enemy reacts, strategic leaders help the Air Force adapt and overcome the changes.

The current strategic leader development system assumes there is a proper balance of training, education and experience to develop the necessary competencies at each leadership level. The current process also assumes that education is adequate to develop strategic thinking skills and to overcome the heavy initial focus on training. Analysis of a rated officer career path in the context of the time and methods needed to develop strategic leaders highlights the limitations of the current system.

Limits of Current Leadership and Force Development System

This section will use a development model to highlight the inadequacies of the current system in development of strategic thinking skills. This model also helps show the importance of broadening assignments early in a rated officer's career. *AFDD 1-1* relies on mentoring and self-education to smooth out the gaps in education and to help overcome the early training focus of Air Force development, but analysis shows sporadic implementation and lack of framework to ensure development of strategic leaders. Lastly, this section will identify the continuing trend of Air Force senior leadership homogeneity as well as the potential causes. The trend of homogeneity unnecessarily impedes strategic leadership development.

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[69] Ibid., 59.

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Developing Strategic Thinking Skills

While *AFDD 1-1* highlights strategic thinking as a component of strategic vision, it is important to understand that strategic thinking requires different types of thinking skills than the thinking skills used at the tactical and operational level. In "Preparation of Strategic Leaders," George B. Forsythe extends the human growth concepts of Learning and Development to leadership development.[70] Forsythe describes Learning as "acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values associated with what is generally acknowledged as effective leadership."[71] He compares learning to adding tools to a leader's "kit bag."[72] Learning is how strategic leaders increase their organizational competencies for employing military capabilities, enterprise perspective, and managing organizations and resources. Forsythe states Learning is not adequate to explain the more complex leadership skills that take years to develop.[73] "Leadership at the higher organizational levels requires not just more knowledge and skills, but qualitatively different ways of doing business."[74] These different ways of doing business relate to the *AFDD 1-1* concept of strategic thinking.

To explain these different ways of doing business in the context of strategic thinking, he uses the concept of 'Development.' Forsythe defines Development as the recognition and accommodation of different frames of reference.[75] The reorganization and addition of new frames of reference provides a leader with increased capacity to understand and visualize. When looking at complex problems, a change or re-organization in frames enables strategic leaders to see what

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[70] George B. Forsythe, "The Preparation of Strategic Leaders," *Parameters* XXII (Spring 1992): 40. Use of the capitalized terms Learning and Development throughout the monograph refer to Forsythe's concept while learning and development refer to the traditional terms.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 41.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 42-43.

they thought before was just an independent part, now as a part in a larger pattern.[76] Forsythe notes it takes considerable time for the development of these abilities to mature. "If the services delay attention to strategic leader development until an officer matriculates at a senior service school, it may be too late."[77] Mr. Daniel R. Sitterly, Director of Force Development for the Air Force, noted the importance of developing these strategic thinking skills early in an officer's career in his 2010 testimony to Congress. "Through an increased focus on critical thinking at junior levels, we are developing an officer corps both capable of, and empowered to solve the problems they will encounter throughout their careers. They are learning and practicing strategic thinking earlier than in the past."[78] In "What's the Matter with Being a Strategist," General John R. Galvin, former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, agrees and notes that waiting and hoping for education alone to meet the requirement is not adequate. "We need to agree that strategy is not an "elective" of the later years of an officer's career--that work in this field has to begin early."[79]

Challenging a future strategic leader's frame of reference helps foster Development of strategic leadership skills. Exposure of future strategic leaders to different environments and experiences enhances their Development as well.[80] The exposure to new environments and experiences equates well to the *AFDD 1-1* concept of breadth or broadening. "The level of strategic vision includes challenges to gain breadth of experience and leadership perspective (e.g., educational opportunities; training focused on the institutional Air Force; joint,

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[76] Ibid., 43.

[77] Ibid., 44.

[78] House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Statement of Mr. Daniel Sitterly, Director of Force Development, United States Air Force*, Continued Engagement: DoD Responses to the HASC Report on PME, November 30, 2010, 2, http://democrats.armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=575e5fb5-ad17-486c-9316-6829280fdded (accessed February 16, 2012).

[79] John R. Gavin, "What's the Matter with Being a Strategist," Parameters XXXX (Winter 2010-2011): 88.

[80] Forsythe, 44-45.

intergovernmental, business, and international views)."[81] Time for Development in the form of

breadth or broadening is limited early in an officer's career due to heavy initial training

requirements. With the recent acceleration of promotion to O-4 at the eight-year point,

opportunities outside flying seasoning and upgrade in a rated officer's major weapon system

(MWS) are minimal. The focus of the first five years of a rated officer's career is MWS

proficiency training. The goal of proficiency training is to develop competent flying skills.

Without competent flying skills, the Air Force risks being able to "fly, fight, and win." Figure 3

below, portrays the general development path of a rated officer in the Air Force.[82]

Time in Service	Rank	Activity	Development Opportunities
1	O-1	Undergraduate Flying Training	
2	O-1	MWS Initial Qualification	
3-4	O-2	Seasoning in MWS	
5-6	O-3	Upgrade in MWS	Eligible for SOS
7-8	O-3	Second assignment	Broadening at Wing level
9-10	O-4		Eligible for ACSC
11-12	O-4		Broadening Staff assignment
13-14	O-5		Squadron Operations Officer
15	O-5		Squadron Command
16	O-5		Attend AWC

Figure 3[83]

This focus on training early in a rated officer's career is appropriate, but it limits time

available for strategic leadership development through breadth or broadening assignments. The

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[81] *AFDD 1-1*, November 8, 2011, 32.

[82] United States Air Force, *Air Force Instruction 36-2640: Executing Total Force Development* (Washington DC, December 16, 2008), 38.

[83] Table derived by combining officer career path guide in *Air Force Instruction 36-2640* with current promotion timelines from Air Force Personnel Center.

limited broadening opportunities are likely to occur at the Wing or Group level.[84] An assignment outside of flying normally does not occur until the eleven or twelve year point. During those first ten years, while there is some opportunity for Development in the Forysthe model, the majority of training is in the form of technologically focused Learning. In a *Parameters* article, George Mastroianni takes this a step further, labeling pilots technical experts and noting an "anti-intellectual strain in Air Force culture."[85]Air University professors and military instructors who observe rated officers first hand make similar claims.[86] While strategic level broadening experiences are limited early in an officers career, there are two PME opportunities.

The first occurs around the five year point with SOS. The Air Force intent is for the recently expanded SOS to increase to eight weeks with a focus on profession of arms, communication, leadership, warfare, and international security studies.[87] The Air Force plan is for all company grade officers to attend in-residence SOS. Following SOS, the next opportunity for PME is ACSC, which usually occurs around the ten year point. Until 2012, the Air Force had sent young officers in their first two years of service to PME to attend the Air and Space Basic Course (ASBC).[88] With the incorporation of ASBC into SOS, there are now anywhere from four to seven year between an officer attending in-residence PME. The extended breaks between PME cause some to label it "discontinuous and episodic."[89]

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[84] *AFI 36-2640*, 38.

[85] George B. Mastroianni, "Occupations, Cultures, and Leadership in the Army and Air Force," *Parameters* XXXV (Winter 2005-2006): 83.

[86] Bethel et al and Drew are examples.

[87] Markeshia Ricks, "Writing Part of New Focus at Leadership School," *Air Force Times*, January 8, 2012, http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/01/air-force-squadron-officer-school-010812w/ (accessed January 15, 2012).

[88] Ibid.

[89] Jay W. Kelley, "Brilliant Warriors," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 58 (Spring 1996): 108.

Strategic thinking skills take time to develop. There are limited opportunities early in a rated officer's career for broadening opportunities, which foster this type of development. In addition, there are large gaps between PME. The current development model relies on mentoring and self-education to overcome this early inbalance and to help foster development of strategic leaders.

Mentoring and Self-education in a Technologically Focused Culture

AFDD 1-1 specifically lists mentoring and self-education as methods to develop strategic vision. *Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-3401* outlines the mentoring process. *AFI 36-3401* states, "Mentoring helps prepare people for the increased responsibilities they will assume as they progress in their careers."[90] According to *AFI 36-3401*, the primary mentor is an officer's immediate supervisor or rater but it notes the subordinate is not restricted from other sources of mentorship. *AFI 36-3401* notes that mentorship should cover a wide range of topics to include, "career guidance, technical and professional development, leadership, Air Force history and heritage, air and space power doctrine, strategic vision, and contribution to joint warfighting."[91] The AFI does not provide any specific reference or framework for development of strategic vision.

The intent is for mentoring to fill in the gaps and connect the different threads of training, education and experience. However, the process appears broken. In an *Aerospace Power Journal* article, Colonel Tom Hall, at the time a professor at AWC, claims "We emphasize PME as a square to be filled but don't come close to having leaders develop leaders - it's simply not in our

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[90] United States Air Force, *Air Force Instruction 36-3401: Air Force Mentoring (Washington DC, June 1, 2000),* 1.

[91] Ibid., 2.

ethos."[92] Lieutenant Colonel French, then a National Defense Fellow with RAND, expresses a similar concern about mentoring. "During my twenty years in the Air Force, I haven't seen this concept embraced by the Air Force, and I have rarely seen it implemented by individual supervisors."[93]

In an article for Air University's *Concepts for Air Force Leadership*, Lieutenant Colonel James Young outlines a model for mentorship slightly different from the Air Force model. For a mentor, he recommends a visibly successful senior officer who is outside the subordinate's direct chain of command.[94] These outside mentors could provide a career long relationship, unlike commanders who change assignments after one to two years.[95] Lieutenant Colonel Young expands on the role of a mentor in the development of officers. "The officer must be encouraged continuously to challenge himself intellectually and to develop personal growth capabilities through self-education-both on and off duty."[96] In addition, he notes the requirement for a feedback loop in the relationship. Challenges and a feedback loop provide potential opportunities for Development in the Forsythe model. However, *AFI 36-3401* does not address the role of challenges and feedback in mentoring. Due to performance reporting and direct chain of command concerns, it is difficult for the mentee to provide unbiased feedback to mentors who are also usually their immediate supervisors in the Air Force model.

While AFI 36-3401 notes the importance of multiple mentoring topics, it focuses on advising subordinates about their career progression. The topics listed in the AFI include PME

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[92] Tom Hall, "I'd Rather Be Flying: The Ethos of the Air Force Officer Corps," XV, no. 2 *Aerospace Power Journal* (Summer 2001): 84.

[93] French, 4.

[94] James D. Young, "Use of a Mentor to Enhance Professionalism in the Air Force," in *Concepts for Air Force Leadership*, ed. Richard I. Lester and A.Glenn Morton (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2001), 112, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/au-24/contents.htm (accessed February 15, 2012.

[95] Ibid., 113.

[96] Ibid.

and Academic Education, Evaluation and Performance Feedback, Promotion Selection, and The Military Assignment System.[97] While helpful in navigating an Air Force career, the AFI fails to provide a mentoring framework to bind together and build on the different threads of training, education, and experience. The AFI does not discuss the importance or methods to help foster development of strategic thinking skills. In addition, the AFI does not provide direction on the importance of a mentor to help guide and encourage self-education. Dr. Smith, a member of the original DAL initiative team, expresses similar concerns. "Commanders and supervisors should mentor their subordinates on more than directly job-centered topics, including imparting strategic perspective and motivating self-study efforts."[98]

General Galvin argues in favor of early self-education and believes strategist development is composed of formal schooling, in-unit education and experience, and self-development.[99] He notes the following about self-education. "It is precisely when the officer is in the unit milieu that we need to encourage personal study and critical thinking. In-unit education is essential, and we do not have enough of it."[100] In "Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leaders", Major General Richard A. Chilcoat provides a similar assessment. "Strategic skills are developed over the course of a career through formal and informal education and self-development, and additionally through professional experience."[101]

Colonel Guillot argues "Self-learning is also valuable - especially reading. All strategic leaders are voracious readers-and they read outside their normal area of expertise, again, to

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[97] *AFI 36-3401*, 3-5.

[98] James R. Smith, "Expeditionary Leaders, CINCs, and Chairmen: Shaping Air Force Officers for Leadership Roles in the Twenty-First Century," *Aerospace Power Journal* XIV, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 42.

[99] Galvin, 85.

[100] Ibid., 86.

[101] Richard A. Chilcoat, *Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leaders* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 1995), 14.

expand their perspective and increase their conceptual capacity."[102] However, self-education is more than a self-study program based on the latest Air Force Chief of Staff's reading list. As Colonel Drew notes, "Nonflyers tend to be technicians, consumed by the arcane complexities of their specialties. Both flyers and nonflyers worship more often at the altar of superior technology than at the shrine of superior strategy."[103] With such a technologically focused culture, self-education to develop strategic leadership needs direction and encouragement. Mentoring and self-education should work together to develop these strategic leadership skills. Mentoring provides a method to challenge what officer's learn during self-education. A mentor sparks discussion and challenges the officer's pre-existing thoughts. Without the discussion and challenges, self-education is merely Learning in the Forsythe model. With the discussion and challenges, it becomes Development. In *American Generalship*, General David J. Jones, asserts that you learn from reading and it helps an officer think more broadly. He also notes that the discussion helps shape values, which is part of the foundation for leadership.[104] Puryear also highlights the role of discussion and challenges in his description of General Fox Conner as a mentor to then Major Eisenhower. "Conner gave Major Eisenhower historical books to read, then asked him questions about them."[105]

Much like mentoring, the Air Force suffers from a lack of self-education. Colonel Drew notes "Air Force efforts to promote informal, personal, career-long professional development have been very limited and largely ineffective."[106] With an early and heavy focus on technological training and limited mentoring, the lack of self-education is not surprising. Linking

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[102] Guillot, 74.

[103] Drew, 218.

[104] Puryear, *American Generalship*, 171-172.

[105] Ibid., 157.

[106] Drew, 213.

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mentoring with self-education could provide motivation, oversight, and a framework to ensure the introduction of strategic thinking early in a rated officer's development.

Analysis of *AFDD 1-1* with respect to a typical rated officer's career path highlights the lack of opportunity for strategic leadership development early in a rated officer's career. Colonel Drew captures it well with the following observation. "In the face of such training early in an airman's career, developing a Clausewitzian mind-set that is agile and at the same time attuned to subtleties and nuances can be problematic."[107] Providing a mentoring framework for strategic leadership development as well as linking mentoring with self-education offers some help to offset the technologically focused culture that dominates the early portion of a rated officer's career. However, the Air Force has a history of further impeding strategic leader development in a rated officer's career. The trend goes back to the initial establishment of the Air Force as a separate service and the domination of strategic leadership by the bomber and then fighter generals.

Trends in Air Force Strategic Leadership

Since its inception in 1947, two distinct "tribes" have provided the majority of the Air Force strategic leadership. The first tribe was the bomber pilots. The bomber pilots reigned supreme from World War II through the Vietnam War. The second tribe was the fighter pilots. The fighter pilots started their rise during the Vietnam War and fully exerted control in the 1980s.[108] Despite the inconclusive results of strategic bombing during World War II, bomber pilots like General Curtis LeMay were unwavering in their faith of strategic bombing and SAC.

The Air Force counterpart to SAC was the Tactical Air Command (TAC). While SAC was responsible for strategic bombing, TAC was responsible for fighters and direct support to

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[107] Ibid, 203.

[108] Smith, 42-43.

ground units. In fact, one of the conditions on the creation of a separate Air Force was the promise of the creation of TAC. Army leadership after World War II felt the creation of TAC would offset some of the bomber pilot's focus on strategic bombing and ensure the Army received air support for its operations.[109] In hindsight, TAC could not slow the takeover by the bomber pilots. In 1961, the leader of these bomber pilots, General LeMay, became Chief of Staff of the Air Force. By the 1960s, bomber pilots from SAC accounted for more than one-half of the four-star generals in the Air Force.[110]

The strategic leaders of SAC developed a robust and rigid training system to prepare SAC for the employment of nuclear weapons. The training demands coupled with SAC's quest for increased strategic bombing capability and capacity severely drained the financial and personnel resources available to TAC and the rest of the Air Force.[111] The drive for increased capability and capacity in the form of new aircraft also helped foster a culture that eschewed strategy for technology. While the strategic leaders from the bomber pilots believed in technology, the technology focused on manned aircraft advancements to support their pursuit of strategic bombing theory. Following World War II, missile technology offered new strategies for airpower, but the Air Force was not interested. "While the Army and Navy were actively exploring the potentials of the V-1 and V-2 as prototypes for future missiles, the Air Force was just as actively ignoring them."[112] Instead, in support of SAC, the Air Force pursued newer and more advanced aircraft like the B-52, KC-135, SR-71 and the B-70. The focus on SAC and strategic bombing limited the ability of the bomber pilots to provide strong strategic leadership. "The Air Force was having difficulty coping with change and was developing a reactive rather

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[109] Worden, 29-30.

[110] Ibid., 103.

[111] Ibid., 77.

[112] Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force*, 199.

than a proactive posture by the late 1950s."[113] The Air Force's own internal study determined the Air Force structure fostered parochialism.[114] While the bomber pilots were instrumental in securing an independent Air Force, in the process they created an Air Force culture focused on manned aircraft technology and dedicated to the pursuit of strategic bombing.

The Vietnam War further highlighted the strategic leadership shortfalls of the bomber pilots and the culture they bred. The bomber pilot's unwavering dedication to strategic bombing was consistently at odds with the flexible response strategy pursued by the civilian leadership against Vietnam. The bomber pilots were unable to provide a strategy besides the massive bombing of North Vietnam that fit with the civilian limitations on the war effort. This came at a time when the civilian leadership under President Kennedy wanted a range of strategic options to counter the full spectrum of warfare to include conventional and counterinsurgency. In addition to the limited strategic options offered by Air Force strategic leaders in Vietnam, "Kennedy was dismayed by LeMay's failure to incorporate economic considerations into his military advice and by the cumbersome bureaucratic processes of the Air Force."[115]

Promotions played an important role during the reign of the bomber pilots and the rise of the fighter pilots. General LeMay received approval for an on-the-spot promotion system as a reward for officer's in SAC. In addition to special on-the-spot opportunities, "SAC personnel consistently enjoyed higher promotion rates than the other commands through 1965."[116] The increased promotion opportunities extended to SAC general officers as well.[117] The shift in power from the bomber generals to fighter generals was partly due to a change in promotion policies. Following the Vietnam War, while the Air Force was doggedly pursuing its next strategic

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[113] Worden, 109.

[114] Ibid., 110.

[115] Ibid., 112.

[116] Ibid., 63.

[117] Ibid., 81.

bomber, Secretary of Defense Laird pushed the services to bring new thinkers into the senior ranks. In response, the Air Force started promoting officers with fighter pilot experiences sooner in their career than other officers.[118] Worden highlights that "Korean War generation four-stars with fighter backgrounds reached four-star rank on average more than one year earlier than their bomber peers."[119]

Fueled by the promotion system, the reign of the bomber generals and fighter generals highlights the risk of homogeneity in Air Force strategic leadership. Worden claims the leadership homogeneity created "myopia and monistic thinking."[120] Worden also claims the uniformity of perspective hindered strategic leaders from understanding or recognizing the need for change when faced with new challenges.[121] This inability to reorganize or create new frames of reference relates to Forsythe's Development concept.

In *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul*, published by Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Thomas B. Erhard labels the Air Force a monarchic or centralized organizational structure.[122] He notes that in a centralized organizational structure, the dominate group dictates the type, probabilities, speed, and depth of any changes to the organization. This theory helps explain some of the fighter general's reluctance to embrace increasing RPA capabilities. Erhard even claims that the selection of General Norton Schwartz, a special

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[118] Ibid., 224.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., 238.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Thomas P. Ehrhard, *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, October 2009), 7, http://www.csbaonline.org/publications/2009/09/an-air-force-strategy-for-the-long-haul/ (accessed November 5, 2011).

operations airlift pilot with no fighter or bomber experience, is an attempt to break the fighter

generals sway over the Air Force.[123]

Another risk of leadership homogeneity and the associated myopic views is a lack of

potential strategic leader positions for Air Force generals. In an Army War College research

project, Colonel Kenneth Carlson notes a lack of Air Force grown strategic leadership throughout

key positions in the Department of Defense. "From 1990 until 2006, COCOM commanders

number a total of twenty-eight general officers, thirteen Army, eight Navy, five Marine, and two

Air Force."[124] In 2009, Erhard noted a similar finding, with the Air Force providing only one of

the last nine Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In addition, Erhard highlights that the Air

Force held none of the eleven key positions on the Joint Staff at the time.[125]

To overcome leadership homogeneity and myopic vision, Worden stresses, "broad

education and experience and a diversity of views at the senior executive level are necessary to

cultivate visionary leaders."[126] Erhard recommends an increased focus on graduate education, in-

depth officer education and most importantly, to develop and advocate compelling ideas.[127]

Broadening and education are key ingredients in the Development process. With minimal

strategic leadership development early in an officer's career and the length of time required to

develop and grow strategic thinking skills, the Air Force struggles to catch up and provide

adequate broadening and education later in an officer's career. AWC or a similar senior service

school is the normal education method, but it is insufficient by itself. Barry D. Watts, former head

of Department of Defense Programs and Analysis and Senior Fellow at CSBA, claims that based

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[123] Ibid., 7.

[124] Kenneth D. Carlson, "A Deliberate Process: Developing Strategic Leaders in the United States Air Force" (United States Army War College Strategy Research Project, Army War College, 2007), 14, http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA469621 (accessed July 20, 2011).

[125] Ehrhard, 29.

[126] Worden, 238.

[127] Ehrhard, 57.

on the British Higher Command and Staff College experience, waiting to develop strategic

thinking skills in senior officers at senior service school is the wrong approach.

> First, British experience indicates that by the time officers are eligible for, or have attained, flag rank, many — perhaps a majority — will still have difficulty getting their thinking out of the "tactical weeds," so to speak. Most officers in combat arms will have gotten where they have in their service careers based mainly on demonstrating tactical competence, and few are likely to retain the mental agility to move beyond tactics.[128]

Colonel Drew agrees about the limits of episodic PME. "This is a sad situation because

even in ideal circumstances, there is no way that two 10-month visits to Air University can

adequately replace career-long personal professional development and relevant academic

education."[129] In a letter to the *Armed Forces Journal*, Dr. James Jay Carafano, Director of

Heritage Foundation's Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies and visiting

professor at National Defense University, voiced similar concerns about trying to develop

strategic leaders just through PME at AWC or a senior service school.

> The military defers senior-level professional military officer education until most attendees are over 40 years old. That is a mistake. Officers need this experience when they are young — before they are 30 — when education will have its greatest impact. Early education will prepare officers to accept strategic responsibilities earlier in their careers, be better mentors and be ready for a "lifetime of learning" throughout their professional careers.[130]

While PME alone is insufficient, additional broadening and education opportunities later

in a rated officer's career are minimized due to the Air Force promotion system. The current

promotion system creates senior officers without maximizing development time prior to

promotion to general officer. Similar to how the promotion system favored bomber and then the

fighter generals with minimal breadth outside their functional area, the current Air Force

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[128] Barry D. Watts, *US Combat Training, Operational Art, and Strategic Competence*, (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, August 2008), 51-52, http://www.csbaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2008.08.21-Combat-Training-Operational-Art-Strategic-Competence.pdf (accessed November 5, 2011).

[129] Drew, 214.

[130] James Jay Carafano, "Letters: Officer Education," *Armed Forces Journal*, (June 2010), http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2010/06/4604361 (accessed November 16, 2011).

promotion system selection of below primary zone (BPZ) officers favors officers who have not maximized breadth opportunities. Lieutenant Colonel Carl D. Evans details this BPZ trend in his AWC research paper titled "Growing Tomorrow's Leader in Today's Environment".

Lieutenant Colonel Evans contends "A natural tension has always existed between the need to develop future leaders with sufficient breadth while also ensuring the appropriate depth and recency of operational experience to be a credible commander in a flying organization."[131] Evans analysis is from 1998, but a review of recent promotion and command screening board results reveals similar findings. Historically, 86% of the Air Force officers promoted to Brigadier General are BPZ by at least 2 years.[132] The following table highlights the BPZ rate, joint tour completion, and senior service school in residence completion for officers selected as candidates for Wing Commander and Group Commander for the last three calendar years. Command is a crucial part of career progression to general officer in the Air Force. Normal career progression is squadron command, group command and then wing command. A review of the current Air Force senior leader biographies notes that the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, all Major Command Commanders (MAJCOM), and key staff were all prior wing commanders.[133] Evans concludes the same. "Almost without exception, rated BG selects were chosen from the pool of incumbent or graduated Wg/CCs."[134]

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[131] Carl D. Evans, "Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment" (Research Report, Air War College, 1998), 70, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/awc/98-094.pdf (accessed January 6, 2012).

[132] United States Air Force, "AF Colonels Spread the Word Brief (November 28, 2011)," Air Force Portal, https://www.my.af.mil/gcss-af/USAF/ep/globalTab.do?channelPageId=s6925EC13399C0FB5E044080020E329A9&command=org (accessed January 7, 2012).

[133] United States Air Force, "Air Force Senior Leaders," Air Force public website, http://www.af.mil/information/afchain/index.asp (accessed January 7, 2012).

[134] Evans, 16.

Wing Command	BPZ	Joint Tour	Senior Service School
CY 09	100%	88%	100%
CY 10	100%	90%	100%
CY 11	98%	83%	98%
Group Command			
CY 09	81%	68%	57%
CY 10	73%	71%	83%
CY 11	53%	65%	75%

Table 2[135]

The data shows an increasing requirement for BPZ as rated officers move from group to

wing command. With recent rates of 98% and 100%, BPZ is a near mandatory requirement for

selection on the Wing Command Candidate List (CCL). Evans argues that the BPZ trend is a

result of two factors. First, early promotions maximize the future time available for Brigadier

Generals to progress in rank prior to reaching the mandatory retirement date. Second, early

promotions maximize the pool of officers available for promotion to each rank beyond Brigadier

General.[136] While Title X determines mandatory retirement dates (MRD) for general officers, Air

Force policy determines timing for promotion to Brigadier General.[137] "The later an officer is

promoted to Brigadier General, the less amount of time that officer has as a general before

reaching the MRD."[138] Less time for promotion above Brigadier General results in less potential

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[135] United States Air Force, "2011 Command Screening Board Demographics," Air Force Portal, https://www.my.af.mil/gcss-af/USAF/AFP40/d/s6925EC13399C0FB5E044080020E329A9/Files/editorial/Demographics.pdf?channelPageId=s6925EC13399C0FB5E044080020E329A9&programId=t88B4F00B2AAC19B6012AF2C56F7E0D61 (accessed January 7, 2012).

[136] Evans, 5 &11.

[137] United States Air Force, "AF Colonels Spread the Word Brief (November 28, 2011)".

[138] Evans, 5.

for promotion through the general officer ranks.[139] BPZ promotion "borrows time from the earlier phases of one's career thereby lengthening the time available in the latter phases."[140] This borrowed time comes at the expense of early promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel. At the time of Evans monograph, officers selected for Brigadier General were an average of 3 years BPZ.[141] Current Air Force statistics shows 86% of officers selected for Brigadier General were at least 2 years BPZ.[142]

The drive to produce BPZ Colonels with the necessary requirements for promotion to Brigadier General in a compressed period significantly influences the career progression of all officers.[143] Evans notes the BPZ trend drives selection of officers for command, education, and broadening assignments.[144] BPZ officers face a compressed timeline to complete these assignments. Officers who are not BPZ face increased competition to compete for the same command, education, and broadening assignments. The lack of broadening and education opportunities early in an officer's career compounds the problem. The Air Force must overcome the lack of early development, but must do it in minimum time in order to maintain BPZ timelines. In effect, the self-generated BPZ push minimizes broadening and education opportunities both early and later in an officer's career. Later in their career, officers are shuffled through command, education and broadening in minimum time in order to "check all the boxes" for potential promotion to Brigadier General.

By focusing less on BPZ requirements, the Air Force could gain up to three years of additional strategic leader development through breadth, education, and experiences early in an

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[139] Ibid., 6.

[140] Ibid., 6.

[141] Ibid., 10.

[142] United States Air Force, "AF Colonels Spread the Word Brief (November 28, 2011)".

[143] Evans, 11-12.

[144] Ibid., 12.

officer's career. This additional development time provides five important functions. First, additional time enables opportunities early in an officer's career for broadening and education. Second, additional time maximizes development opportunities later in an officer's career when there is less focus on training. Instead of moving quickly between the assignments required to compete for Brigadier General, officers can spend their full time in command or in their broadening assignment or in a second broadening assignment. Third, additional time increases the officer pool with the necessary requirements to compete for promotion to Brigadier General. Squadron command is the first time many rated officers are in a command position. The BPZ push usually starts just prior to taking command or shortly thereafter. Delaying the push for Brigadier General provides time to identify and select those late bloomer or exceptional command performers to compete for Brigadier General, not just those selected for BPZ track prior to completing command. Fourth, additional time helps ensure operational competency. Earlier broadening reduces the need to push officers through command, joint, and staff assignments later in their career just to compete for Brigadier General. Lastly, earlier broadening and increased potential for full command tours increases a commander's mentoring opportunities and continuity.

The Air Force has a history of leadership homogeneity. The current promotion focus on BPZ continues this trend and impedes development of strategic leaders. The impediment coupled with an early focus on training, episodic PME, and limited opportunities for development of breadth forces the Air Force to rely on senior service school to 'catch-up' on lost time. Analysis shows this is inadequate for development of strategic leadership skills. Mentoring and self-education should fill in the gaps and help overcome the imbalance between training, education, and experiences. Some note that actual mentoring and self-education is limited. In addition, there is no mentoring framework to promote strategic leader development or to help link mentoring and self-education. Past recommendations focus on changes to the assignment system, education

system, and promotion system as ways to encourage development of breadth, self-education, and mentoring.

Recommended Leadership and Force Development Changes

Providing additional development time early in an officer's career through less emphasis on BPZ enables many of the past recommendations to encourage and develop strategic leadership. Changes to the assignment system and education system provide opportunities for strategic leader development, but the BPZ push later in an officer's career limits time available for future strategic leaders to take advantage of those opportunities. Tension between training and education early in a career is necessary to maintain the proper balance between short-term mission requirements and long-term strategic leadership development. Not every rated officer will become a strategic leader, but as the Air Force Development Director and General Galvin noted, providing strategic thinking skills early in a career is beneficial.

Only "Developing Air Force Strategists – Change Culture, Reverse Careerism" notes the influence of BPZ on early strategic leader development, but the authors' recommendations do not capture the importance of mentoring and the potential linking of mentoring with self-education. Lieutenant Colonel Evans provides a detailed analysis of the BPZ influence, but his concern focuses on the impact of BPZ on operational credibility and the potential for careerism.[145] Additional development time minimizes the potential loss of operational credibility, but careerism is a potential concern.

In a December 2006 speech to AWC students at Maxwell Air Force Base, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned against careerism. Secretary Gates uses the example of Colonel John Boyd as a maverick who instead of being somebody who focused on getting promoted to general officer, Colonel Boyd did something and developed the Observe, Orient, Decide, Act

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[145] Evans, 50.

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(OODA) loop. "To be or to do? For the kinds of challenges America will face, the armed forces will need principled, creative, reform-minded leaders—men and women who, as Boyd put it, want to do something, not be somebody."[146] In the conclusion of his speech at Maxwell, Secretary Gates returned to the subject of careerism. "For the good of the Air Force, for the good of the armed services, and for the good of our country, I urge you to reject convention and careerism and to make decisions that will carry you closer toward—rather than further from—the officer you want to be and the thinker who advances airpower strategy in meeting the complex challenges to our national security."[147]

Secretary Gates comments about using airpower to solve complex nation security problems equates well with the role of a strategic leader. The challenge is eliminating the perception of careerism and any actual careerism. Providing additional time for development through less emphasis on BPZ helps eliminate the perception of careerism. Instead of 'ticket punching' his or her way through command, a joint assignment, and senior service school, a future strategic leader could complete a joint assignment early in his or her career, complete a full command tour and then compete against a larger pool of officers, all who have their requirements met for promotion to Brigadier General. Another way to minimize the potential for careerism is through mentoring.

When the Air Force institutionalized DAL into a Force Development division, the Air Force also created an Airman Development Plan (ADP) for each Airman. The intent of the ADP is to allow an Airman to communicate his or her assignment and development preferences.[148] *AFI 36-3401* lists the assignment system as a topic for mentors to discuss. Mentorship should explain to officers not only 'how' the assignment system works, but also 'why' breadth and advanced

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[146] Gates.

[147] Ibid.

[148] *AFI 36-2640*, 10.

education are important to leadership development. Without a mentoring framework to highlight this and other similar development topics, the author's experience is that the Air Force culture tends to operationalize the ADP process. Commanders and supervisors describe how to complete an ADP, but there is limited discussion or understanding of why breadth and education are important. This further contributes to the perception that those few selected for such assignments are merely careerists.

One tool to help facilitate mentoring and the linkage of mentoring with self-education is social media. While many view social media as entertainment, it is a collaboration tool. The title may be misleading, but social media provides an easily accessible medium for multiple personnel to collaborate and share ideas. Collaboration and idea sharing enable development. "Some senior officers say transforming the military means more than buying next-generation vehicles or developing new training. It's giving more people access to what they're doing and thinking."[149] For example, Admiral James Stavridis, Commander United States European Command, uses social media as a forum to promote discussion about the use of soft power. Admiral Thad Allen, former Commandant of the Coast Guard, "has a running dialogue online about how he is trying to transform his organization."[150] His intent was to educate junior leaders on how and why he is changing the Coast Guard.[151] Other sites like SmallWarsJournal.com provide a forum for discussions about military strategy. John Nagl notes that sites like SmallWarsJournal.com allow debate amongst top thinkers.[152]

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[149] Gordon Lubold, "Military Brass Joins Wired Troops," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 21, 2009, http://proquest.umi.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/pqdlink?did=1629714521&Fmt=2&rqt=309&cfc=1 (accessed August 23, 2011).

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid.

While 'Baby Boomers' and some of 'Generation X' may struggle to understand the lure of social media, the tool fits the learning style of 'Millennials.'[153] In 2001, the Air Force recognized the different learning style of Generation X and adapted the teaching methodology at SOS. The changes resulted in additional video presentations and increased simulations to help support learning concepts.[154] The Air Force needs to do the same for millennials. A February 2010 PEW Research Center report highlighted the technological focus of millennials. Millennials consider themselves technology enthusiasts. They are more likely than other generations to have a social network profile as well as to connect to the internet when away from home or work.[155] Millennials check their social media profiles almost daily, and they are more likely to receive their news from the internet than the television.[156] That type of behavior makes social media an ideal tool for career long engagement with millennials.

Instead of changing mentors with each assignment, social media allows a mentor to remain connected to the mentee. The Air Force recently setup a mentor network within the online development process. A June 2011 talking paper about the program highlighted that implementation only occurred in pockets and that major commands were not fully aware of the capability of the program.[157] The talking paper noted that work continued to make the program more user friendly and to spread the word about the program. Instead of building their own system, the Air Force should harness the systems already in place like Facebook, Twitter and

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[153] "Millennials" refers to individuals born after 1980. Generation "X" refers to individuals born from 1965 to 1980."Baby Boomers" refers to individuals born from 1946-1964.

[154] Alisen Iversen, "Professional Military Education for Company Grade Officers," *Aerospace Power Journal* XV, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 63.

[155] PEW Research Center, *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation N*ext (February 2010), 25. http://pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf (accessed November 16, 2011).

[156] PEW, 29 & 35.

[157] United States Air Force, "Talking Paper on Status of Air Force (June 27, 2011)," Air Force Portal, https://www.my.af.mil/gcss-af/USAF/ep/contentView.do?contentId=c6925EC1B0DB50FB5E044080020E329A9&channelPageId=s6925EC134EE60FB5E044080020E329A9 (accessed October 26, 2011).

online blogs. The mass accessibility of the established social media sites through traditional computer or mobile phones while at work, home, or traveling is what makes them a better fit for use in mentoring. Recent articles highlight the increasing time demands on officers.[158] The same technology that enables social media also ties many officers to after-hours work at home on devices like Blackberries. The Air Force needs to use this opening into the after-hours time of officers to help rebuild mentoring and self-education.

For example, instead of taking time out of a normal duty day to conduct a mentoring session, a mentor could post an engaging article and his comments on a site for his mentees to read and reflect on. As one mentee responds to the mentoring, others are able to see and respond as well. In another example, a mentor could send out a link to a video on leadership. Rather than mentoring having a separate medium to communicate through, the mentoring takes place within the established day-to-day activities of the millennials. The mentee is able to review an article when it is convenient for him or her. This could take place while at work or while the mentee is in line at the store after duty hours. The mentee is free to review and reflect as his or her time permits. General Norton Schwartz, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, recently did something similar by including videos from Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) in his 2012 Reading List.[159] Recently, Admiral Stavridis posted for his followers a copy of an article he authored on the military operation to protect civilians in Libya. *Foreign Affairs* plans to publish the article in a future edition, but his followers had access and a common forum to discuss the article prior to its official publication.

The ease of discussion and feedback is an important feature in the use of social media as a tool for mentoring and self-education. Discussion helps provide direction and can foster

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[158] Bethel et al is one recent example.

[159] Norton Schwartz, "Chief of Staff of the Air Force Reading List," Air Force Public Website, http://www.af.mil/csafprofessionalreadingprogram/index.asp (accessed February 16, 2012).

encouragement. Discussion challenges the mentee's existing frames of reference. These challenges provide opportunities for Development in Colonel Guillot's model. Through feedback, social media also provides a simple and less confrontational method for young officers to challenge the thinking of their mentors. This feedback challenges senior mentors and provides opportunities for them to build new frames of reference as well.

Social media can help offset the early training focus in development without taking away from training time while at the same time accessing the different learning style of the millennials. Given the pressing day-to-day demands and the potential threat of having to do 'more with less' in a time of budget cuts, social media allows the Air Force to leverage additional time for development in a way that is conducive to how the millennial generation learns and develops. The use of social media is merely the adaptation of the past model of face-to-face discussions in a virtual setting.

While the use of social media is a developing concept, some officers have enjoyed early opportunities for PME or broadening assignments. For example, General Douglas M. Fraser, the only sitting Air Force geographic combatant commander, completed a year as an aide to the 12th Air Force Commander prior to attending ACSC for PME. Following ACSC, he completed two years on the Air Staff and then another two years on the personal staff of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.[160] Six years of broadening in the form of staff and PME, coupled with the excellent mentoring opportunities during his staff assignments develops strategic leadership. Another good example is Major General Norman J. Brozenick, Jr., Commander of Special Operations Command Pacific. Major General Brozenick completed one year of broadening at Air Force Special Operations Command and then two years on the Air Staff prior to attending PME. He completed two years of PME, with the second year at the School of Advanced Air and Space

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[160] United States Air Force, "General Douglas M. Fraser Biography," Air Force public website, http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioid=5456 (accessed February 19, 2012).

Studies (SAASS), the Air Force equivalent of the Army's School of Advanced Military Studies.[161] He later attended Stanford University as an Air Force Fellow.

The ideal example is General David H. Petraeus. General Petraeus completed a broadening tour at the United States Military Academy as an academic instructor. He also completed education for his Doctorate degree from Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs. Later he attended a Fellowship at Georgetown University.[162] Having experienced it firsthand, General Petraeus is also an advocate for broadening opportunities through civilian education. "The future of the U.S. military requires that we be competent warfighters, but we cannot be competent warfighters unless we are as intelligent and mentally tough as we are aggressive and physically rugged. We will become that way not merely by observing the differences between the military and the civilian academic world, but by experiencing them first hand."[163]

Conclusion

Strategic leadership skills are different from those required at the tactical and operational level. Like strategic thinking skills, strategic leadership skills take time to develop and mature.[164] The heavy training required to operate today's Air Force systems provides little time or incentive for rated officers to develop these strategic leadership skills early in their careers. Ten-month attendance at a senior service school is not enough to overcome this early emphasis on training and the technologically oriented culture of the Air Force. *AFDD 1-1* relies on mentoring and self-education to fill in the gaps between education, experience and training, but mentoring appears

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[161] United States Air Force, "General Douglas M. Fraser Biography," Air Force public website, http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=11237 (accessed February 19, 2012).

[162] David Cloud and Greg Jaffe, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2009).

[163] David H. Petraeus, "To Ph.D. or Not to Ph.D…," *American Interest*, July/August, 2007, 20.

[164] Forsythe, 44.

sporadic and focused on career progression rather than development of strategic leadership skills. In addition, there is inadequate linkage between mentoring and self-education. The technologically oriented training and lack of mentorship and self-education provides rated officers with minimal strategic leader development early in their careers. As officers progress in their careers and become more senior, a rush to promote the next generation of generals further limits opportunities for strategic leader development.

The reign of the bomber generals and then fighter generals highlights an Air Force trend of senior leadership homogeneity. While one tribe or another dominates many organizations, the bomber general's inability to see past strategic bombing and the fighter general's reluctance to embrace RPA highlight the myopic views leadership homogeneity creates. Current Air Force promotion trends limit opportunities for breadth and rush strategic leaders into positions without maximizing the opportunity for broadening. This self-inflicted form of leadership homogeneity stifles strategic leadership development. With a large amount of tactical and operational experience from Iraq and Afghanistan, the Air Force needs to avoid falling into the same trap that the bomber generals did after World War II with experience substituting for education and broadening. The three critical reviews of Air Force strategic leadership development from professors and military advisors at Air University, personnel in positions to see a vast and varying number of Air Force officers, should serve as warning about the limitations of the current development system.

Similar to many strategic level problems, the process for developing Air Force strategic leaders is complex and defies simplistic, one-dimensional solutions. Past literature provides narrow recommendations for encouraging and developing future strategic leaders without looking at the problem systemically. It takes career long engagement to encourage and develop future strategic leaders. While changes to the assignment system and education system provide opportunities to develop breadth and strategic thinking skills, less emphasis on BPZ promotions is vital to enable future strategic leaders the time to pursue these opportunities. One area for

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increased study is the use of social media. Social media could help improve the current process in all areas. Social media has the ability to encourage young officers, provides a framework for career long mentoring and can influence strategic leader development in both mentee and mentors.

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