Hybrid Conflict and Effective Leadership Training

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Abstract

Hybrid warfare is a significant aspect of today's operational environment, and it poses unique and challenging ethical scenarios for leaders at all echelons. More specifically, leaders at the tactical level face ever-changing threats that require quick decision-making with limited information. Leaders with strong ethical foundations informed by the law of armed conflict (LOAC), guidance on the use of force, and shared unit values are better equipped to counter this challenge. Recognizing this, the 16th Special Troops Battalion (16th STB), a U.S. Army unit headquartered in Baumholder, Germany, recently assessed its leadership development program and found that the unit did not provide sufficient opportunities for its commissioned and noncommissioned officers to explore and develop their ethical decision-making processes and to exercise them from moral, legal, and professional perspectives. Using the Nazi genocide of European Jews in World War II as a case study in developing a new leadership development curriculum, the 16th STB used a combination of different educational techniques including experiential learning and competency-based training to place its leaders in positions where they could critically examine their own decision-making and value systems.

This article will explore hybrid warfare and its associated ethical implications and then turn to academic research, training doctrine, and unit training to illustrate current approaches to dealing with these issues. Next, it will explain the process by which the 16th STB conducted its revamped leadership development curriculum to address these issues. Perhaps most important for military ethics and LOAC instructors, the 16th STB conducted a survey of the training audience

shortly after completion of the program, which suggests additional steps that could be taken to better integrate leadership development and professional military education in the U.S. Army as a whole.

Today, NATO forces face a unique set of threats in the form of "hybrid warfare." This term has many different definitions, but at their core, these definitions include the presence on the battlefield of actors (both real and virtual) either who do not belong to traditional nation-state military formations or who conceal their true identities as they conduct operations against their adversaries (Johnson, 2018). Often operating just under the level of open armed conflict, these actors include civilians, transnational groups, terrorists, insurgents, private security contractors (PSCs), and even "patriotic hackers," who align themselves with the goals of different nations but whose actions are not attributable to those countries under international law.

As these threats to Western militaries evolve and grow, there is increasing concern within the Department of Defense (DOD) that professional military education (PME) at the brick-and-mortar schoolhouses has failed to keep pace with operational developments and is not producing leaders, planners, and operators sufficiently prepared to face these new realities. In the unclassified *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, the DOD found that "PME has stagnated, focused more on the accomplishment of mandatory credit at the expense of lethality and ingenuity" (U.S. Department of Defense [DOD], 2018, p. 8). As to the direction forward to address this problem, the DOD emphasized that the forc-

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es needed to "emphasize intellectual leadership … while embracing new technology and techniques to counter competitors" (DOD, 2018, p. 8).

It is unlikely that there is a single solution to this problem. However, recent work by a U.S. Army combat support battalion suggests an education-and-training model that could be useful in building ethical resiliency and responsiveness in small-unit leaders. In the autumn of 2017, the 16th Special Troops Battalion (16th STB), headquartered in Baumholder, Germany, and with companies in other parts of Germany and Italy, assessed its leadership development program. The battalion's leadership concluded that the existing program provided insufficient opportunities for its commissioned and noncommissioned officers to explore and develop their ethical decision-making processes and to exercise them from moral, legal, and professional perspectives.

This article will first explore hybrid warfare and its associated ethical implications and then turn to relevant research, training doctrine, and training to illustrate current approaches to addressing these issues. Next, it will explain how the 16th STB, using the Nazi genocide of European Jews in World War II as an overarching theme, revamped and implemented a leadership development curriculum to address decision-making from moral, legal, and professional perspectives. Most critical for military ethics and law of armed conflict (LOAC) instructors, the battalion conducted an anonymous survey of the training audience shortly after the completion of the program to determine whether they believed the training had met its educational goals (a measure of validity). Analysis of the survey results suggested effective steps that could better integrate leadership development and PME as a whole, emphasizing the growth of critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills within the small-unit environment. More research is needed across the Army, but this analysis is a starting point.

Hybrid Conflict

To understand hybrid warfare and its potential impact on leaders' ethical decision-making in our current military organizations, a definition must first be established. Hybrid warfare might not be a new concept, but it nonetheless poses characteristically unique and continuously changing challenges to military leaders. In a survey of the history of hybrid warfare beginning with ancient Rome, Murray and Mansoor (2012) investigated its historical aspects in their work, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*. Murray and Mansoor (2012) defined this type of warfare as, "conflict involving a combination of conventional military forces and irregulars (guerrillas, insurgents, and terrorists), which could include both state and nonstate actors, aimed at achieving a common political purpose" (p. 2). As the type of actors involved in hybrid warfare has continually morphed over time, theorists have attempted to broaden their understanding of the actors and their effects on the battlefield.

In *Armed Groups: The 21st Century Threat*, Thompson (2014) highlighted a major characteristic of today's hybrid threat by investigating armed groups across the world. He concluded that the majority of these armed groups are prevalent in unstable states and that the United States and its allies have engaged these types of forces predominately in the course of intrastate conflicts. He noted that it is imperative for the United States and partner militaries to understand the nature of and warning signs associated with these engagements, as failure to do so might lead to destabilization of friendly governments and hinder the accomplishment of national objectives (Thompson, 2014). These considerations are objective and utilitarian. From a leadership perspective, they have a potentially obscuring effect on the ethical concerns that must be dealt with on the way to achieving these goals.

Ethical Implications of Hybrid Conflict

Regarding hybrid warfare, Murray and Mansoor (2012) contend, "[Military] leaders at all levels must gather lessons learned from ongoing military operations and alter doctrine, operational concepts, and strategy to meet unexpected challenges and opportunities. In a nutshell, leadership matters" (p. 16). This is an area of leadership where commanders must take ownership of the decision-making process as well as the ethical implications of the actions of their formations. This is an area in which commanders not only need to make the right decisions, but they also need to model the methodology they used to arrive at those decisions for their subordinates.

For over a decade, the U.S. Army has formally recognized the ethical challenges of operating in complex environments. In Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, it states, "Ethically speaking, COIN environments can be much more complex than conventional ones. Those in leadership positions must provide the moral compass for their subordinates as they navigate this complex environment" (U.S. Department of the Army [DA], 2007, p. 245). This doctrine recognizes that leaders at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels in these types of operations all make decisions that potentially determine the fates of military personnel on one side and the local civilian populace on the other.

In a 2012 study of U.S. Marine Corps company commanders' experiences in hybrid conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, this complexity is characterized at the small-unit level by four primary factors (Committee, 2012). First, small units were geographically isolated from one another. Second, commanders were often challenged by the diversity of the operational activities they were expected to undertake, ranging from intense kinetic engagements to nation-building efforts. Third, enemy combatants intermingled with local populations, posing a particular challenge to both commanders and their troops. Finally, leaders faced the requirement to make "rapid, high-consequence decisions under rules of engagement aimed at supporting an effective counterinsurgency strategy by minimizing unintended consequences of kinetic actions" (Committee, 2012, p. 29).

Guidance on the Use of Force

One of the most important measures that militaries have taken to grapple with complexity issues is to provide clear and actionable guidance on the use of force by their personnel. For example, the United States uses Standing Rules for the Use of Force to guide commanders and soldiers in domestic U.S. situations and Standing Rules of Engagement (ROE) for use in deployments abroad to regulate the application of lethal force and mitigate potential civilian losses (DA, 2017, p. 77). Limiting civilian casualties goes beyond humanitarian aims and the requirements of LOAC, as it also has a utilitarian aspect directly related to mission success, especially in the context of hybrid warfare. Leaders want to gain support, or "win the hearts and minds," of local populations while maintaining a positive public image in the eyes of both the domestic and international community. However, excessive or unnecessary civilian casualties can readily decrease local populace support and cause public outrage. These factors often weigh heavily on sustaining continued operations within a given region, especially from a political standpoint where public opinion can place pressure on politicians' and military officials' strategic involvement and tactical protocol in certain cases.

On this point, the Department of the Army has stated, "In all types of operations, failure to mitigate CIVCASs [civilian casualties] can jeopardize success" (DA, 2012a, p. 7). Unnecessary civilian casualties can lead to general public unrest and a lack of support within a host nation. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) established a Civilian Casualty Mitigation Team in 2011 and an Afghan-IS-AF Joint Incident Assessments Team to conduct analyses and determine any possible adjustments to NATO force tactics that could result in fewer civilian casualties. (Prescott, 2016, p. 330). Further tailored applications to address this concern include a number of examples from Afghanistan such as tactical directives issued by senior commanders, evaluation of investigative reports involving civilian deaths to identify potential systemic problems in ROE training and understanding, and establishment of specific cells in headquarters staff devoted to identifying and tracking instances of civilian casualties (Prescott, 2016, pp. 265–266, 268–270).

The ethical implications of conforming to the applicable guidance on the use of force are profound. As Davidson (2005) noted in his article "War and the Doubtful Soldier," questions regarding the morality of military action, as set out in just war theory, parallel "international legal restrictions on the proper conduct of armed warfare" (p. 91). Thus, combatants "who struggle with and must overcome their natural moral aversion to killing another human being … seek justification for their actions" (Davidson, 2005, p. 94). It is not uncommon in contemporary conflicts to find instances where adversaries specifically target these ethical considerations in the minds of Western forces with misinformation campaigns and the use of human shields, for example (Gardner, 2010; Nebehay, 2011). It is one thing to be a conscientious commander concerned about his or her unit's use of force on the battlefield,

but what about nominally "friendly" forces operating in the same battle space who are not so diligent about these ethical considerations?

Private Security Contractors

Private security contractors have featured significantly in the conflicts that have occurred since the end of the Cold War, and their activities have ethical implications for commanders in the field. PSCs can range from static guards outside installations at one end of the spectrum of activity all the way to personnel in actual combat units (Brown, 2018). One of the most recent examples of this is the battle that occurred between Russian mercenaries and U.S. forces in Syria in February 2018 (Gibbons-Neff, 2018). Mercenaries pose a unique threat as they operate outside the traditional bounds of LOAC. Applying traditional legal provisions and moral principles to PSCs is challenging because it can be difficult to discriminate between them and other forces or protected civilians, and because their legal and operational status under host-nation law is often unclear and politicized (Prescott & Male, 2018, pp. 658–662).

In Afghanistan, there were very serious concerns that Afghan PSCs were both corrupt and actively working with the Taliban. For example, the U.S. air strike in Azizabad in 2008, which ended up killing numerous civilians and significantly damaging the United States' relationship with the government of Afghanistan, was actually in support of a raid against a Taliban commander who was expected to be meeting the chief of the company that provided security services for a nearby U.S. airbase. A post-strike investigation revealed that some of the "insurgents" engaged by U.S. Special Forces in the raid actually might have been working as security personnel (Prescott & Male, 2018, p. 658). These unpleasant realities clearly complicate the lives of commanders from both an operational perspective and an ethical one.

Cyber Conflict

The cyber domain is a relatively new venue for hybrid war, and it poses a new perspective on leadership ethics. While intercepting enemy communications is certainly not new, the scale of the networks transmitting this information and the dependence of modern militaries upon these networks pose potentially catastrophic scenarios. In *Dark Territory: The Secret History of Cyber War*, Kaplan (2016) assessed that there have yet to be concrete ethical positions established amongst members of the international community such as banning cyberattacks affecting critical civilian infrastructure (i.e., against the industrial control systems of dams, waterworks, power grids, and air traffic control equipment) (p. 273).

Continued scholarly work has been done to outline the potential application of international law, including LOAC, to these types of attacks, but there is incomplete consensus among LOAC experts as to how exactly applications of this body of law would play out. Further, as shown by the recent Paris Call agreement, although over 50 nations agreed to nine separate goals of cyber regulation (such as preventing interference by foreign actors in elections and "hacking back" by private companies in response to cyberattacks), a number of cyber-capable nations did not sign, including the United States, China, Russia, and Israel (Matsakis, 2018).

As Clarke (2010) has pointed out, complicating the application of these norms is the potential speed at which cyber war could unfold: "The speed at which thousands of targets can be hit, almost anywhere in the world, brings with it the prospect of highly volatile crises" (p. xi). Clarke summarized his perspective on the reality of cyber warfare by stating that it could happen at the speed of light, that it was global, and that it had already begun (p. 31). Not all warlike conduct in cyberspace would occur at this speed; in fact, some attacks might take months or even years to fully unfold. An example of this is election meddling, where hackers could influence events both actively and passively through their deliberate actions, but the impacts of these acts might not register on an electorate in a manner that is quickly recognizable (Nakashima, 2018).

In developing responses to hybrid-warfare threats, many nations seem to be focusing on technical measures and physical tactics and techniques. However, as shown by Russian actions in the Crimea, hybrid-warfare threats are often intangible and subtle, and they are often designed to attack the attitudes and decision-making processes of military personnel. Examples include subverting military officers and causing them to leave their posts and jamming key Ukrainian officials' mobile phones as the Russian invasion unfolded (Iasiello, 2018, p. 54; Polityuk & Zverev, 2017). Coupled with quick-acting, cyber-enabled misinformation techniques, actions such as those affecting the Ukrainians can place leaders in difficult moral scenarios that challenge the values and the ethical foundations upon which officers and soldiers rely to make sense of confusing and often chaotic operational situations (Oullette, 2018). Leaders who possess a strong ethical foundation are more apt to successfully navigate the complexities posed by a modern hybrid-threat environment. Therefore, hypothetically, they could be more likely to make more timely and sound ethical decisions. That said, more research is needed to more fully support this hypothesis.

Research, Training Doctrine, and Training in the NATO Context

Hybrid warfare is unquestionably a focus of Alliance and U.S. efforts in the European theater, and any U.S. military action is likely to be part of a multilateral effort. To place the 16th STB's leadership development curriculum in the proper context, it is useful to briefly review what is happening in the NATO context with regard to re-

search on hybrid warfare, the thrust of training doctrine, and the conduct of training itself before looking at it in the U.S. context.

Research. NATO members have recognized hybrid threats at the national and strategic defense levels as a high priority in their respective international security concerns. Consequently, NATO and partner countries have established several relevant and useful centers such as the Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, Finland; the Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, Latvia; and the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia ("NATO Welcomes Opening of European Centre," 2017). These centers use their niche capabilities to focus on strengthening coordination with the European Union (EU), increasing intelligence capabilities, and providing resources to training programs and exercises in countering hybrid threats. These centers, along with the increase in large-scale training events incorporating hybrid-threat scenarios, are a clear demonstration of how seriously NATO and its member states are prioritizing the threats posed by hybrid warfare.

Thiele (2015) suggests that training for hybrid warfare should emphasize cross-functional command-and-control mechanisms allowing for interoperable responses. Additionally, education and training in preparation for hybrid war should address innovative thinking, flexibility of action, and enhanced cognitive skills (Anton, 2016). Consistent with this research, the recently revised publication *A Civil-Military Response to Hybrid Threats* outlines scenarios, vignettes related to hybrid warfare, and the need to build resilience amongst personnel (Cusumano & Corbe, 2018). The need for these skills applies to all members of NATO, as hybrid threats in the North Atlantic region pose a paramount concern for all within the Alliance.

Training doctrine. Although NATO training doctrine does not explicitly emphasize the need for innovation, United Kingdom training does emphasize the need for approaching problems as they present themselves, rather than trying to jam them into some cookie-cutter doctrinal approach ("Education and Training," 2019). For example, British Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) AC 71940, *Land Operations* (2016), states, "Firstly, land forces require the command and cognitive skills to be flexible and adaptable. Essential to all aspects of flexibility is a military culture that supports mental agility and initiative" (p. 16). Second, the doctrine notes, "a broad doctrine provides a common foundation on which land forces can build when faced with potentially new situations. Although the principles of doctrine endure, tactics, techniques and procedures need to evolve rapidly, adapting to the specific situation" (p. 16). Although not a NATO member, Australia works closely with the Alliance and uses similar doctrinal guidance. For example, Australian Army training doctrine encourages taking initiative and creating realistic training while using simulations (Australian Army, 2018, p. 14).

Training. Similar to the United States, NATO has recognized hybrid threats as an important priority to be addressed in high-level training ("NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat," 2011). Trident Juncture, for example, serves as the premier exercise where NATO forces cooperate to bolster the collective strategies of the Alliance

("Exercise Trident Juncture," 2018). This training event simulates various scenarios combining both conventional and hybrid threats to include cyberattacks and ballistic missile defense. Gen. Jean-Paul Paloméros, the former supreme allied commander transformation of NATO, stated,

> Those [hybrid threats] are very demanding risks and threats that we have to face almost all around the globe because a lot of countries are putting a lot of money to reinvest in their defense. We must take this into account in the NATO equation. (Weisgerber, 2015)

High-level NATO exercises such as Trident Juncture recognize that senior political and military leaders at the strategic and operational levels make the most impactful and sweeping decisions. The most direct and personal challenges, however, likely fall to leaders at the tactical level. These leaders are the ones who actually experience the direct real-life impact of implementing the orders of a higher authority rather than having them filtered through near real-time drone video feeds and situation reports.

However, many exercises that deal with hybrid warfare appear to largely focus on the development of technical skills in dealing with the means and methods of this form of conflict. For example, along with other NATO forces, German *Bundeswehr* (armed forces) units recently participated in Locked Shields, a NATO exercise that focused on protecting computer networks. German units also took part in other exercises focused on countering cyber and information threats, such as EU CYBRID 2017, EU PACE 17, and CMX 17 (Schulzki-Haddouti, 2018). These exercises included various scenarios such as antiglobalization groups, identifying "fake news" and false reports, and managing protest demonstrations (Schulzki-Haddouti, 2018). However, it is not clear if these exercises significantly tested the human element of leaders' decision-making skills and patterns within this new environment at the small-unit level.

The lack of emphasis on the critical ethical, moral, and legal components of decision-making in complex environments within its own training program is what led the 16th STB commander to have his leadership development team come up with a different approach to leadership development at the battalion level and below. In a hybrid threat or other complex operational environment, the decision-making processes of both commanders and soldiers could be based on very fleeting and incomplete information, and they could be forced to come up with solutions in a radically reduced time frame. As Hedges and Al-Arian (2008) wrote, "There, a flash of motion. Is that a weapon? Is that a child? Is that a child with a weapon? Is that someone aiming at my buddy?" (p. 21).

Similarly, social media can distort the understanding of the battle space in real time. One example of this phenomenon is the leveraging by Islamic State of social media platforms to catalyze fear and exaggerate its strengths as it prepared to go on the offensive by posting ominous and militant-themed photographs and

the top-trending "AllEyesOnISIS" moniker (Singer & Brooking, 2010, p. 5). It is crucial that tactical leaders are trained to understand the nature of the complex environments they might be operating in so that they can make quick and ethically sound decisions and help instill these same thought processes in their subordinates. With these considerations as a backdrop, it is now time to turn specifically to U.S. efforts in these areas.

Current U.S. Army Training Doctrine and Guidance

In 2012, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command updated its guidance for training and leadership development in ADP 7-0 and Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 7-0, both titled *Training Units and Developing Leaders* (DA, 2012b, p. 1-2; DA, 2012c)*. The publications provide an overview of the roles of training and leadership development, its principles, and unit management. Both conclude that it is ultimately up to a unit's commander to offer the proper time and resources to ensure effective leader development occurs—meaning that every commander has a responsibility to assess his or her leadership development program to determine whether it is yielding the desired results in the unit's officer and noncommissioned officer leadership.

This doctrine broadly and sufficiently sets out principles to guide the development of leaders to operate in unknown environments. It gives leaders the leeway to tailor training to their specific operational environments in creative and innovative ways. Reasonably, today's dynamic operational environment calls for a focus on hybrid threats due to their likelihood of appearing on or near the battlefield in various and unpredictable forms. Given the wide span of influence of hybrid threats and their potentially amorphous nature, it is important for units to leverage the principles outlined above while also addressing specific issues associated with complex threats such as those posed by hybrid actors.

Paradoxically, small-unit leaders today are operating with the concurrent realities of greater centralized supervision by military leaders and less actual personal supervision in austere areas. For example, Lt. Gen. Mike Short, commander of the NATO air campaign in Kosovo, has often related the story of directing his son, an A-10 pilot, through the Combined Air Operations Center as his son was attempting to target certain Serbian tanks (Short, 2000). Conversely, technology has its limits, and young leaders often find themselves working in isolated locations with significantly less personal guidance from superiors. Gen. Mark A. Milley, then chief of staff of the Army, addressed these challenges from the perspective of "disciplined disobedience," stating that a "subordinate needs to understand that they have the freedom and they are empowered to disobey a specific order, a specified task, in order to accomplish the purpose. It takes a lot of judgment" (Lopez, 2017). This type of disobedience should not be "willy-nilly," he says but rather should be "disciplined … to achieve a higher purpose" (Lopez, 2017).

Importantly, this sort of tactical disobedience would in fact be disciplined because it would occur within important constraints—doctrine, training, and tested tactics, techniques and procedures, as well as the applicable directives on the use of force. And, while Milley may not have meant it directly, this "disciplined disobedience" would also apply in situations where leaders find themselves balancing ethical, legal, and moral aspects of operational situations in their decision-making. In combatting hybrid and other complex threats, what is happening in leaders' minds as they assess and weigh these relative values may in fact be one of the most important areas in command decision-making. How should leadership-development training programs be constructed to instill the reasoned and disciplined judgment necessary for this sort of decision-making to happen in a fairly predictable way?

Ultimately, it is paramount for leaders to develop their own ethical lenses and reasoning reflexes to effectively navigate through these challenging decisions. Too often, education of this sort seems to be relegated to the schoolhouse rather than conducted in the unit environment where these decisions will need to be made. Too often, training seems focused on demonstrating easily measured technical skills rather than addressing the important intangibles of ethical and reasoned decision-making. Mindful of these concerns, the 16th STB leadership team purposefully chose to construct its training program around an uncommon issue, yet a thorny problem from a historical perspective, in the modern Western military experience—the decision whether to obey orders that are arguably unethical, immoral or illegal.

Learning in Military Education and Training

In taking this somewhat unconventional approach, the 16th STB purposefully decided to break out of the traditional field-training silo and embrace schoolhouse educational techniques and content to emphasize learning as an organizing theme rather than categorizing the delivery of the instruction. The Army doctrine described above lays out sufficient guidance for conducting unit-level training and leadership development as a whole, and it does not explicitly distinguish between learning, education, and training. Important benefits result from combining these concepts together, such as fulfilling individual human aspirations for education and instilling intellectual agility, although these important intangibles might be difficult to measure (Kime & Anderson, 2019).

ADP 7-0 notes that experiential learning is the most effective learning technique for the warfighter at the tactical level, but its focus is on the operational and training context, and it does not address specific educational approaches (DA, 2012b, p. 1-2). Perhaps this reflects the continuing debates among scholars and Army professionals as to the most useful approach in educating Army leaders in

the future. Some see the need for a more practical application of academics, such as a "case method" approach, whereas others argue whether focusing more directly on job-oriented/military learning rather than a broader liberal arts education is better in general (Gudmundsson, 2018; Morgan-Owen, 2018).

The 16th STB leadership recognized this challenge and found it necessary to deliberately take time to both train and educate its leadership in an innovative way to maximize learning at both the individual and the group levels. The battalion leadership sought out various learning methods and techniques to create a comprehensive and holistic curriculum for its participants. These techniques included experiential learning and competency-based training that would place its officers and sergeants in positions where they could critically examine their own decision-making and value systems.

In line with the guidance laid out in ADP 7-0 and with its own assessment of potentially effective educational techniques, the 16th STB primarily pursued an experiential-learning-based curriculum. In her comprehensive overview of experiential learning, Swartz (2012) laid out a description of classifications and best practices for the implementation of experiential learning. She identified different types of experiential learning, who benefits from the learning, and concrete measures useful in planning and incorporating experiential activities into a curriculum. The primary goal of experiential learning in her view was to apply knowledge to experience in order to develop skills or new ways of thinking along with a foundation of interdisciplinary and constructivist learning (Schwartz, 2012). Military audiences appear to be receptive to this type of learning in general because it allows students to use their own personal experiences in determining how to solve problems and which lessons to take away from the instruction based on their individual backgrounds.

One important step of experiential learning is reflection. According to Biniecki and Donley (2016),

> If one considers past experiences as helping learners make sense of current experiences, then reflection on these past experiences may play an important role in learning. The ways learners construct knowledge and why and how they reflect, for example, at an exhibit, are part of the learning process and may be intricately connected to the context of the learning. (p. 4)

This is especially critical in dealing with sensitive matters where individuals are able to draw from experienced emotional responses such as those obtained from visiting memorial sites.

Another focused educational technique is competency-based learning. Kolb and Wolfe (1981) conducted extensive research investigating the relationship between experiential learning and competency-based training as it pertains to lifelong learning and adult development. They argue that certain professions should move away

from an outcomes-based methodology for development and focus on specific competencies. Kolb and Wolfe (1981) put forward,

> From a social control point of view, professions seem to have originally emerged in the areas of human activity, e.g., medicine, religion, law, where it is not feasible to judge performance on the basis of outcomes. Since one cannot judge a doctor on whether or not a specific patient dies or a lawyer on whether a specific case is won or lost the emphasis in professions is on controlling the means of performance rather than the outcomes. (p. 316)

They conclude, "One is therefore professionally competent if he or she performs the accepted professional activities or methods adequately regardless of their results" (p. 316).

16th STB Curriculum

The 16th STB developed a unique program that took advantage of its close proximity to especially relevant historic sites in Central Europe. As its overarching theme, the program was based on the assessment and examination of leaders' decision-making in the context of case studies of genocide during World War II. While this vast scale of genocide presents a massive array of themes related to humanity as a whole, at a very granular level it also provides specific, useful examples of leader decision-making challenges in complex operational and hybrid environments.

The battalion chose a case study of a German reserve infantry battalion in German-occupied Belarus in 1941 as a central part of its leadership development program and embedded it within a sequence of introductory lectures on genocide, a practical writing exercise involving a mock administrative investigation, and group discussion. The program culminated with site visits to Auschwitz and the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg, where the most infamous Nazi war criminals were tried by the International Military Tribunal after World War II. The overall objective was to strengthen the ethical foundations and decision-making abilities of leaders in the battalion by exposing them to a variety of experiential learning and competency-based lessons that led them to critically assess their own assumptions and values and how they applied them in making tough decisions.

Introductory lectures at home station. The curriculum took three months to complete. Through videoconferencing that occurred every two weeks, each event included all participants across the battalion in both Germany and Italy. Every event had a corresponding prerequisite assignment for all participants. First, the unit leaders read segments of Bergen's *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* to provide them with a general understanding of the Holocaust and its historical context (Bergen, 2003). An STB officer who was a history major with a background

in Holocaust studies then conducted a traditional-style lecture followed by a group discussion to review important points with the participants.

Next, the training audience read a case study designed for leadership development, *Ordinary Soldiers: A Study in Ethics, Law, and Leadership* (Prescott, 2014b)*.* The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at West Point and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum created the case study and lesson plan, which focuses on company-level leaders who were in command as part of a reserve infantry battalion in occupied Belarus in October 1941. The lead author of the case study delivered the lecture from a National Guard base in the United States and then conducted a question-and-answer session for the training audience.

In the case study, the battalion commander gave each of his three maneuver company commanders a single illegal order in the clear: to kill all of the Jewish civilians in their respective areas of operation (Beorn, 2014, p. 121). One company commander, a member of the Nazi *Schutzstaffel*, or SS, complied immediately. The second company commander, a World War I veteran, considered the order and then explicitly rejected it. The third company commander, also a World War I veteran, sought to avoid carrying out the order at first, but once the battalion commander confirmed the order in writing, he directed the company's first sergeant to conduct the executions while he attended to administrative duties.

The authors of the case study specifically created it for a military audience because the situation in which the company commanders were placed clearly illustrated the ethical dilemmas confronting small-unit leaders in deciding whether to execute an illegal order. The 16th STB found that the case study applied aptly in teaching participants about the complexities of hybrid threat-environments. This scenario was similar to hybrid-threat environments, and leaders needed to make sound decisions with limited information within a shortened window of time. Further, these decisions revolved around a group of people who were lumped together with insurgents by senior Nazi leadership but had never posed an actual threat in the company areas of operations. In the end, the case study showed that despite facing harsh conditions of war and radical regimes, the leaders and soldiers within the battalion were ordinary men who still possessed the ability to recognize illegal orders and make sound moral and legal decisions (if they wanted to). This could demonstrate the "disciplined disobedience" as described by Milley, where leaders possess the necessary technical, moral, and ethical foundations to do something different from exactly what their superiors had ordered them to do if it is not the right moral action.

Practical exercise. Following the reading assignment, the next session in the leadership development program introduced the audience to U.S. Army Regulation (AR) 15-6, *Procedures for Administrative Investigations and Boards of Officers* (DA, 2016). An AR 15-6 investigation is the standard U.S. Army process used by commanders to appoint investigating officers to look into incidents or allegations and to generate findings and recommendations as to what should be done. Investigating

officers are usually appointed when there are suspicions of unethical, immoral, or illegal acts within the respective commander's organization.

The leadership development program used these investigations as a practical vehicle to develop competencies and critically examine the actions of the *Wehrmacht* (German armed forces) company commanders. Experience has shown that combining high-level tasks involving judgment with practical tasks can lead to both training efficiencies and improved performance by troops being trained (Larsen, 2005).

A military attorney provided legal support to the battalion participants on the proper way to conduct and write an AR 15-6 investigation. This presentation was useful because it established an ethical decision-making framework. To emphasize this, the *Ordinary Soldiers* case study's lead author delivered a lecture via videoconference on the important points of the reading and discussed the linkages in the case study between leader ethics and decision-making while having to deal with hybrid threats.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the participants were placed in roles of investigating officers and directed to write a mock AR 15-6 investigation report to be completed within two weeks. In the report, they had to identify what they found as the reasons why the executions of the Belarusian civilians in 1941 occurred as they did and make recommendations to the commander as to how he might incorporate lessons learned from the historical case study. An important teaching point, participants were not graded nor were they instructed to focus on any specific outcome. Rather, the assignment guidance emphasized focusing on the competency of the critical thinking required to execute the investigation process.

The lead author of the case study had served as the chief legal advisor to the ISAF commander in Afghanistan. He applied his experiences from Afghanistan to the conduct of the battalion's leadership training program, reviewing more than 50 submitted investigation reports and providing individual written feedback to each of the participants via email.

Staff ride. After receiving verbal feedback from both the commander and the lead author in a final question-and-answer period conducted via videoconference, 80 leaders from the 16th STB traveled to the site of the Auschwitz complex, which served as the foundation of the experiential learning within the curriculum (Borden, 2017). At the complex, they took extended guided tours through the camps, participated in seminars coordinated through the memorial site curators, and visited nearby museums including the Auschwitz Jewish Center. Each night following the site visits, the 16th STB chaplain led reflection sessions with the leaders covering the challenging and often emotional experiences each participant faced. This allowed each participant to draw from his or her own emotional experiences and build upon them with the experiences of others. Following the visit to Auschwitz, and in keeping with the legal component of the training, the participants stopped at the Nuremberg Palace of Justice. There they learned about the legal aftermath and its impact on the development of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and present-day LOAC.

Survey results. Through conducting a postprogram survey, the 16th STB determined that it had largely achieved its overall goal of further developing the ethical foundations and decision-making abilities in its leaders through a balanced combination of education, training, and experience, specifically linked to complex threat environments such as hybrid warfare and the ethical implications of making decisions in those environments. After the conclusion of the program, the battalion conducted an anonymous survey managed by the unit chaplain to determine what the participants deemed to be successes, what areas of the leadership development program could be improved, and where benchmarks needed to be set for future events. The results of the survey offer useful insights into how the participants reacted to certain aspects of the training.

Of the 40 participants responding to the survey, 75% were officers and 25% were noncommissioned officers. A majority of the training audience assessed that the leadership development curriculum increased their understanding of LOAC principles—69% agreed that after the full leadership development training program, their understanding of LOAC had improved. Additionally, 85% of participants believed they were now more aware of different tools or approaches that might help them in making sound moral and ethical decisions as leaders. Lastly, 85% of participants believed completing the training program made them more aware of the impacts of ethical decision-making by leaders upon peers and subordinates. These results suggest a strongly positive trend in realizing the training program's main goal of linking leadership with ethical and legal principles to be better equipped to conduct sound and timely decision-making in complex environments such as those characterized by hybrid threats.

Regarding the *Ordinary Soldiers* case study, 92% found it largely sufficient or sufficient to understand the challenging circumstances in which the small-unit leaders were placed. This suggests that the case study presents itself clearly and with sufficient context so that the training audience understands what happened in terms of the ethical and leadership dilemma that the German company-level leaders faced in deciding how to handle an illegal order in the midst of a complex conflict scenario.

The AR 15-6 exercise was designed to address several leadership principles by fostering adaptive leadership and critical and creative thinking skills. In terms of systematically identifying the causes and effects of a complex problem, 63% found it at least largely sufficient. Regarding the lead author's individual feedback and group discussion on the overall results, 67% found it at least largely sufficient in preparing for future investigations as well as for appreciating the process of creating a successful leader development program. This suggests an overall positive trend in individual proficiency and that participants found both individual and group interaction to be beneficial in learning. This also highlights the effectiveness of the competency-based learning approach where participants worked on developing critical skills.

Survey results suggest that the site visits yielded the highest success rate and had the most direct impact on participants of all of the different leadership-development-program components. The site visits were found to be largely sufficient or

sufficient by 80% of respondents in bettering their individual understanding of the real-world impacts of flawed ethical decision-making by leaders, and 82% found the site visits were largely sufficient or sufficient in bettering individual understanding of obligations as a leader to set and enforce value-driven standards. Lastly, 82% found that out of the entire program, the site visits had the most profound personal impact upon them. This presents the importance and effectiveness of incorporating experiential learning into curriculums. This does not necessarily mean that leadership-training programs require physical site visits to be successful. However, site visits can evoke emotions and allow participants to experience the subject matter in a physical sense, often stimulating stronger responses.

As a whole, the program built unit cohesion—92% of the participants felt an increase in this after the completion of the program. This included an assessment by the respondents of both company and battalion staff relationships. Ordinarily for units in the field, particularly battalion level and below, these shared experiences are generally a function of training specifically oriented on mission tasks and actual operations. As the 16th STB's leadership development program shows, however, training at this level can also include important but tough-to-crack leadership development issues that do not necessarily lend themselves to easy quantitative evaluation, which are often not addressed in the field.

Potential Lessons Learned

The 16th STB gained insight into planning future programs as a result of the survey because it also solicited feedback for general improvement recommendations. Most of the responses addressed potential changes to logistical coordination, the curriculum, and the participation of individuals in the program. One critique concerned the value of including the noncommissioned officers with the officers during certain parts of the program. This especially pertained to the AR 15-6 exercise. Perhaps in future events, practical exercises could take the form of situational training lanes where roles and scenarios were created dependent upon participants' rank. These types of events may also offer more real-world and combat-like scenarios for participants.

Another improvement suggested in the survey results was the desire to break into smaller groups for discussions. The majority of the seminars incorporated a lecture for the entire audience followed by an interactive group discussion as a whole. Conceivably, it would be more beneficial to allow time to break into smaller groups to discuss various questions and concepts and then present each respective groups' findings to the whole audience. This decentralized method would help ensure that each individual had the chance to participate more rather than just listening. As the *Ordinary Soldiers* lesson plan has been used with U.S. Army cadets in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs at the University of Vermont and

Norwich University, the training audiences have been given small-group discussion time, with a group size of six or seven participants being ideal (Prescott, 2014a). To effectively use this teaching approach through videoconferencing, however, would require solving a number of logistical and technical challenges.

The 16th STB leadership also learned new techniques in coordinating the different parts of the program that could apply to planning future events. This included leveraging technology to provide access to remote subject-matter experts, alternating teaching methods, and taking advantage of proximity to historic sites. Given the geographic separation between participants, the battalion applied distance-learning techniques and coordinated videoconferences for all discussions. This allowed all participants to communicate in real time and experience the presentations both audibly and visually. Though face-to-face interaction is a preferred learning environment, videoconferencing mitigated cost issues associated with time, distance, and overall feasibility. Finally, the curriculum included various exercises and assignments to meet the different learning styles of participants. This included reading assignments, lectures, practical exercises, group discussions, and site visits. Studies have shown that incorporating approaches geared to different learning styles leads to a higher rate of student accessibility and engagement, and this appears to have been confirmed indirectly by the survey results in this instance ("Effective Adult Learning," 2012). For future training events, the employment of diverse teaching methodologies should therefore be incorporated at the beginning of curriculum planning as a design-and-delivery priority.

Conclusion

In a recent response to the changing international security environment, the U.S. Army published a concept paper that explores the types of forces that would be needed in the 2025–2040 timeframe to deal effectively with hybrid threats. It proposed the creation of smaller units, either forward-deployed or capable of moving into a theater quickly, with sophisticated capabilities that would allow them to continue to function even when cut off from main U.S. units (U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC], 2017, p. 23). Interestingly, one of the key capabilities of these units would be the ability to conduct "engagement," which was defined as "the combination of physical, informational, and psychological actions taken to build relationships or influence actors' decision-making (moral and mental)" (TRADOC, 2017, p. 75). One component of this engagement capability was the demonstration on the part of leaders of "character, competence, and commitment in word and deed to the U.S. military profession and ethic to secure the support of U.S., regional partner, and global populations" (TRADOC, 2017, p. 61). What the concept paper did not discuss, however, was the development of the new leadership development programs that would be necessary to create this type of intangible engagement component at

the small-unit level. If NATO militaries do in fact respond to hybrid threats through developing these sorts of units, there will need to be a fundamental reassessment of the ordinary strategies and methods used to develop small-unit leaders. Given the ongoing debates on the current nature and well-being of U.S. Army professional military education and its need to develop more intellectual and adaptive leaders, this curriculum offers useful ways in pursuing these challenges at the unit level.

The 16th STB invested significant planning time in creating a holistic leadership development program that used different educational and training techniques to maximize its overall effectiveness. The training program demonstrated the benefits of a multifaceted training model using experiential and competency-based training in the context of preparing leaders for making decisions that may be required in complex operational environments such as those featuring hybrid threats. Through post-execution training audience analysis, the lead planners gained valuable insight into planning future events that could apply across a broad spectrum of leadership training models and into the ethical and legal implications associated with them. Given the shared moral, ethical, and legal values of NATO members, the holistic approach used by the 16th STB in leadership development could be integrated in a practical way across Alliance military formations, tailored to individual nations' military histories, organizational cultures, and training approaches and experiences (Prescott, 2017). ଓ

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