

Letter from the Editor in Chief

Where Have All the Warrior-Scholars Gone?

A Challenge to All Military Professionals

On 25 October 1882, Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman gave his opening address to the second cohort of students attending the School of Application for Cavalry and Infantry at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In his speech, Sherman emphasized that soldiers were morally and ethically required to study the profession of arms. He suggested that those soldiers unwilling to pursue higher education were committing fraud against their country. He resented any attempt to belittle the importance of education. He stated, “In war, as in science, art, and literature ... we must look to the books—the recorded knowledge of the past.” It was imperative for Army soldiers to “know how to read and write,” that the best soldiers are the ones “who add to knowledge” and improve the profession.

Recently, several senior officers going through the Command Assessment Program shared anecdotes from their professional experiences. They had served in strategic institutional positions at the very top of the national security policy process and within the headquarters of the Department of the Army. These officers had authored several senior-level policy documents,



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published articles in peer-reviewed journals, and attained terminal degrees. Many also had multiple combat deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, having led troops in frontline infantry units from the platoon to battalion levels. However, some considered strategic-level experience, institutional knowledge, and educational accomplishments distinct professional disadvantages.

When preparing to attend the Command Assessment Program, these officers were advised to focus instead on demonstrating their tactical organization lead-

ership experience and expertise. In feedback from their peers and in mentoring sessions with raters and senior raters, the message was clear: diminish and downplay strategic- and institutional-level knowledge, experience, and expertise. Instead, demonstrate and highlight vocational training, qualifications, and proficiency in small-unit tactics and missions. They were advised to avoid referencing accomplishments and contributions to the profession through higher-level education, professional development, and publication

in professional journals. With the current emphasis on great power competition and the acknowledged imperative for agile, adaptive leaders to fight multi-domain operations, the current triage of priorities in how the military selects future strategic leaders seems to neglect the importance of public-facing engagement in critical thought.

The 2020 RAND Corporation study *Raising the Flag: Implications of U.S. Military Approaches to General and Flag Officer Development* found that senior executive officers who serve in selection programs and on promotion boards remain committed to the trend of picking officers that look like them. This, obviously, is a natural human response. The idea that, “if it worked for me, then it must be right,” nurtures confirmation bias and provides an experiential knowledge heuristic that aids in a complex promotion selection process with tight deadlines.

As Army University Press and *Military Review* enter 2023 and the next one hundred years of publishing and promoting articles and scholarly work by military professionals, I challenge all our military professionals to lead by example. Take risk. Advocate for and promote warrior-scholars. Contribute to the profession. Push back on anti-intellectualism that continues to pervade the ranks. Put pen to paper. Share your ideas and experience. Tackle controversial topics through scholarly discourse. Write!

As I engage with leaders and students across Fort Leavenworth, I take heart in the continued commitment to education, professional development, and the military ethic. However, there does seem to be an apprehension within that population to writing for publication, an aversion to sharing ideas and experiences in a public format open to debate and criticism. Or, as is the current trend, many potential writers instead opt for immediate gratification and impact by engaging on social media and online forums. There is no incentive. The risks outweigh the rewards.

Often, military writers, or “influencers,” run the risk of castigation as self-promoters who are trying to draw attention to themselves. They are categorized as ego-driven in their efforts to write, share ideas, and join the public discourse. Some of that may be true. Regardless, we want and need to encourage our military professionals to contribute their thoughts in writing to make the profession better as well as inform society and the public about our Army, despite any consequences.

It is incumbent on all soldiers who call themselves military professionals to contribute to scholarship and conversation that improves the profession, share best practices and lessons learned, and invest intellectual energy into making “the team” better. We cannot afford weak intellectuals, cognitive misers, and strategic amateurs in the future operational environment. We need and must nurture and promote strong, intellectual warrior-scholars. We need leaders that can write and engage in scholarly public discourse.

I have a mentor that has reached the highest rungs of success both professionally and financially. As a young major, sitting in an elite social club blocks from the White House, I asked him once, after a couple of cocktails, why he was so kind and helpful to me. He reflected that he had been fortunate in “climbing the ladder” of success. But, he said, his mentor, a man by the name of Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, had taught him to look behind him on his way up and always extend a hand to help promising young leaders.

As we launch into 2023, I challenge those who subscribe to the moniker of military professional to write, to share, to engage, to think. Help the profession improve. Cast off and banish any hint of anti-intellectual cynicism or undertone that shames those that seek education and professional development. You can start in 2023 by working with Army University Press, submitting articles or book reviews for publication. Contact us and let us help you reach the full calling and requirement of a true military professional. Write! ■