

## Leader Development for Coalition Partnership

**Colonel Rainer Waelde, Deutsche Bundeswehr, and Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Schwartzman, U.S. Army, Retired**

**W**E HAVE BEEN in action for two hours. Operation Pluto started before sunrise. Afghan police and Hungarian ISAF forces blocked the withdrawal routes to the south. Afghan soldiers, supported by Norwegian and German ISAF forces, entered from the north.

The participation of Afghan, German, Norwegian, Hungarian, and U.S. forces in the hypothetical example above illustrates that the security challenges of today and of the near future require a joint and multinational approach.

Today the military contribution to conflict resolution ranges from high-intensity combat operations to security force training to humanitarian assistance. A soldier is a fighter, diplomat, administrator, instructor, and adviser. The operational environment's demands determine the soldier's functions. He coordinates with both governments and nongovernmental organizations. His missions are complex. The location of his employment is uncertain. Pre-planned operations change rapidly. Environmental and cultural conditions differ dramatically. The time available for predeployment training is limited, as is mandatory training time for leaders.

Training future leaders for every kind of operation is impossible. Therefore, mandatory training must be prioritized to keep predeployment training a matter of quality, not quantity, given the short training time available.

Given the above, we must ask:

- What leader capabilities are required in the 21st-century security environment?
- What knowledge and skills do young leaders need for success in a multinational operational environment?

The U.S. Army and the German Army have a long-standing tradition of cooperation. Although the two armies are different, the challenges their leaders face are similar. This article discusses leader development and leader-

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PHOTO: U.S. Army and German soldiers set up their radio during a German-led platoon attack mission, 23 August 2010, Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany. (U.S. Army photo by Gertrud Zach)

ship training and education in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environment.

## U.S. Army Leader Development

Global trends indicate that it is unlikely that a nation or social collective will attempt the unilateral use of power to further its interests without one or more negotiated partnerships or coalitions. However, both U.S. Army and joint doctrine and German Army doctrine acknowledge there are times where each will, and that retaining the capability to do so is essential. Other than U.S. domestic operations that will always be U.S. only, the preference is for coalition partnership. Coalitions are not new. Environmental conditions dictate the characteristics and purposes of such partnerships. Today the signs point to a future of vacillating partnerships of convenience with the high probability of a shift in coalition power bases.

Although each nation has its best interests at the forefront of its decision making process, the advent of new technologies is moving information at ever-increasing speeds, creating change

dynamics that result in higher than acceptable risk levels. The greater the information complexity, the greater the need for specified capabilities, combined with national will, to achieve strategic aims. Like information power, the social group that possesses the high-demand capability will dictate the coalition leadership terms to the other partners. Incumbent upon all potential partners is the need to develop leaders adept at negotiation and the ability to understand foreign cultures rapidly. The rate of adaptation must keep pace with or exceed the rate of change.

The goal of U.S. Army leader development is to create the conditions for the development of leaders who can lead complex organizations successfully. The Army does this through a balanced approach in the three components of leader development: training, education, and experience, as articulated in the Army Leader Development Strategy. Today's operational environment influences how the Army addresses each component. Knowing that a coalition partnership can form anywhere along the spectrum of conflict compels



(U.S. Army photo by Gertrud Zach)

U.S. Army and German soldiers train together during a German-led platoon attack mission with a U.S. sapper squad in support, Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, 23 August 2010.

studying each partner's potential contributions and the cultural hurdles to overcome. Cognitive reconfiguration to build mutual trust between partners should supersede organizational and materiel reconfiguration.

## Environmental Trends

The *Joint Operating Environment (JOE) 2010* and the *TRADOC Operational Environment* both provide compelling characteristics of the environment. Environmental conditions and variables require close attention for the successful conduct of operations to pursue national interests. Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan have taught nations and military forces around the globe that environmental characteristics are the determining factor for required leader capabilities, now and for the future. They are also a testament to the demise of unilateral action by any one force.

The Army capstone concept conceptualizes how the United States Army accomplishes missions in today's environment. Nations form partnerships to increase capabilities in order to address the constraints and challenges the capstone concept identifies. The Army's concepts of operations and functions identify required capabilities in doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, and personnel and facilities for the 21st-century security environment.

Identifying required leader capabilities for this environment is essential to provide the decision-making foundation for success both in negotiations with coalition partners and in subsequent collective actions.

## Required Leader Capabilities

The development of leaders should change with changing conditions. Leaders require agility to direct rapid shifts from preplanned action and adaptability to reconfigure capabilities to meet new challenges. Nothing in the current operating environment, in any dimension, is fixed. Neither solutions, doctrine, skill sets, nor operational conditions are controlled. Leaders need the skills and education to see the context of events, but they have an even greater need for the abilities only experience can provide. Still, a baseline ability to think through problems and to apply models to develop new solutions is essential. Leader devel-

opment systems create the conditions for training, education, and experiences that, over time, enable leaders to adapt as rapidly as developing conditions dictate, and the cognitive capacity to know when the adaptation must occur.

Army leaders require the following capabilities:

- Life-long learning ability and self-learner skills to facilitate rapid information accommodation and assimilation.
- Agility to rapidly shift physically and psychologically to create the conditions for reconfiguration.
- Adaptability to depart from what is no longer useful and to acquire what is, based on rapidly changing conditions.
- Systemic understanding of the joint and TRADOC operating environments and how to apply tenets of Design and critical thinking to plan for operations and adapt to changing conditions.
- Recognition of changed conditions to a level of significance that warrants an adaptive change to current activities and preplanned outcomes.
- Recognition of when to depart from standard practices and when to develop innovative, non-standard solutions.
- Organizational versatility for collective adaptation.
- Comfort with abdicating control of outcomes to subordinate leaders.
- Cross-cultural effectiveness; propensity for foreign languages and negotiation adeptness.

Advances in technology are increasing the speed of information transfer. Education, cognitive capacity, and interpersonal communication must keep pace with these advances. Emerging mission command doctrine articulates leader behavior for an environment of decentralized operations and degraded networks. Higher levels of innovation, adaptation, and cognitive problem solving are required in the absence of reliable information delivered rapidly. Risk increases dramatically in this environment and must be weighed carefully against mission requirements and the ethical application of lethal force.

## Developing Leader Capabilities

Determining what we require in our leaders is the first step. The second step is achieving developmental outcomes. The Army leader



**International Security Assistance Force Chief of Staff LTG Bruno Kasdorf (German Army) speaks before presenting the German Gold Cross of Honor Medal at a ceremony to honor U.S. soldiers for their bravery.**



**U.S. air medevac pilots and crew members receive the German Gold Cross Medal for bravery under fire while evacuating wounded German soldiers near Kunduz, Afghanistan, 2 April 2010.**

development process is policy driven. Leadership, training, and education have a doctrinal basis. The Army Leader Development Strategy addresses leadership development and the effects of 10 years of armed conflict on leader development. The current strategy outlines nine imperatives essential to restoring the balance lost to excessive time in operating units and to mitigate the tension between immediate requirements and long-term needs.

The Leadership Requirements Model in Field Manual 6-22, *Army Leadership*, Appendix A, establishes leader attributes and core leader competencies. These attributes distinguish high performing leaders of character while the core competencies emphasize leader roles, functions, and activities. Together they represent what an Army leader is and does. Leaders influence people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation, while operating to accomplish the mission and improve organizations.

## **Leadership Training in the German Army**

An important reformist in the Prussian Army, General Gerhard Johann David Waitz von Scharnhorst, referred to the requirements for a German officer by saying, “From now on, a claim to officer rank shall in peacetime be warranted only by knowledge and education and in time of war by exceptional bravery and quickness of perception.” This claim is still very much applicable in the German armed forces today.

A rapidly changing environment and a highly adaptive enemy call for farsighted leaders with moral principles and clear concepts who recognize opportunities and accept risks. Ambiguous situations

that permit different interpretations, particularly of cause-and-effect relationships, require a skillful leader who is willing to make decisions and act intuitively. The successful leader is the fundamental objective of training. The mission determines the requirements profile.

Leadership does not legitimize itself by success alone; it has many facets. Society and members of the armed forces give legitimacy only to leaders who put the mission before their individual interests. A leadership culture consists of individual leadership competence and an overarching leadership philosophy.

Leadership competence is paramount. An individual’s abilities outweigh all other considerations. The individual, with all his strengths and weaknesses, remains the decisive factor for military command and control. This will not change.

The art of leadership is complex. At its core are three elements of competence: knowledge (skills), character (behavior), and experience (capacity).

Leadership skills are the basis for leader competence. They can be a platform of theoretical knowledge to which a leader may turn.

Since no two tactical situations are quite the same, German Army mandatory officer training aims to teach universally applicable and comprehensive fundamentals. By mastering these fundamentals from the start and increasing their abilities to apply them to relevant situations, young officers obtain the necessary tools to cope with changing situations. Operational doctrine is subject to continuous development. Lifelong learning is therefore an integral part of leadership skills.

Competence arises from personal characteristics that influence behavior. We must shape the future military leader's attitudes and behavior with the four cardinal virtues defined by Plato—prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice—as well as the spiritual virtues described by Thomas Aquinas—faith, hope, and charity. Field Marshal Helmuth Graf von Moltke called the virtues of truthfulness, bravery, steadfastness, and politeness (what we would probably call tolerance today) indispensable for military leaders.

This brings us to the German Basic Law: education by superiors is central to leadership behavior. Every superior is called upon to live on a daily basis what he demands of others so that from his example the young leader understands how trust and allegiance can grow, and what he must do to achieve this. Hypocrites cannot be leaders.

One cannot learn leadership in a short time, and one can improve only by gaining experience. Training that only teaches knowledge and skills is not enough. Experience in applying military fundamentals and developing one's capacities is also necessary. Training, simulations, and learning programs play supporting roles. Concrete actions develop leadership capacity.

Helmuth Graf von Moltke noted that "Leading troops is an art, a creative activity based on character, ability, and mental power. Its tenets cannot be described exhaustively. It tolerates neither formulas nor rigid rules. But every leader has to be guided by clear principles." Leadership competence without a guiding philosophy is technocratic and soulless. The two core elements of German leadership are *innere führung* (leadership philosophy) and mission-type command and control.

*Innere führung* binds military leaders to the values of the Basic Law during missions. It is, so to speak, the material that holds Bundeswehr command and control areas together in terms of thinking and acting. It provides a framework and foundation that reflects the legal and social integration of the armed forces and ensures they are

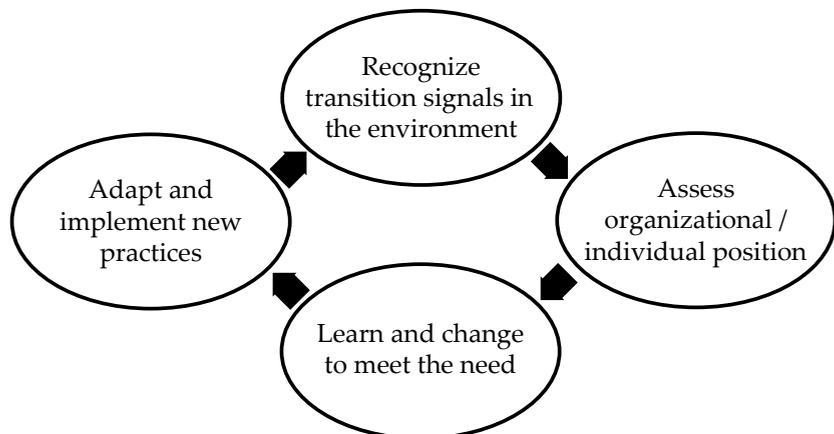
humane, conform to the law, and accomplish missions efficiently. *Innere führung* has a significant impact on leadership behavior and contributes to building intercultural competence. One cannot recognize how one's culture differs from another or develop intercultural competence without knowledge of one's own culture.

The principle of mission-type command and control means the subordinate leader receives a clear and realistic objective as well as the assets required to achieve it and freedom of maneuver in the way he accomplishes his mission. He can concentrate on what is important and dismiss what is not. These conditions do not affect the principle of command obedience, but they do encourage showing initiative down to the lowest level of command as an indispensable factor in responding to a given situation in a timely way.

Mission-type command and control is a complex principle that is not easy to understand. It demands soldiers be willing to take the lead and think for themselves when making decisions and taking action consistent with the overarching strategy in any kind of situation. In the German Army, the superior is a leader, an instructor, and an educator. He is a master of his craft; he bases his actions on the values set forth in the German Basic Law. However, he is a citizen in uniform with a special obligation and responsibility.

## Challenges in Afghanistan

Because of operations in Afghanistan, leader responsibilities have increased at lower echelons. Platoon- and company-level scenarios are as



**Model for coalition partnership.**

complex as battalion- or brigade-level scenarios once were. Young captains and first lieutenants routinely conduct composite force operations. More than ever before, young leaders determine success or failure and life and death. In addition to being a fighter and specialist, the young soldier is a rescuer, helper, protector, trainer, mediator, and diplomat.

During the Cold War, superiors gave platoon leaders and company commanders the time to make mistakes. Today, deployment requirements allow fewer training exercises and young leaders have far less opportunity to learn from their mistakes. We did not impose such a heavy responsibility on platoon leaders or company commanders in the past. In addition, multinational units exist below the division level in Afghanistan today. Young leaders must know the operational doctrines of other armies, as well as different training requirements, leadership philosophies, and cultures. Acceptance of foreign habits and tolerance of cultural differences are indispensable for unity.

## Model for Coalition Partnership

Challenges increase whenever different cultures combine in coalition partnerships. Leaders must depart the known of the status quo for the unknown of adaptation. Developing leaders in a sister service, interagency, intergovernmental, or multinational coalition is a challenge that increases with each addition to the coalition. This article demonstrates how different the approaches taken to develop leaders can be.

The illustration depicts how two or more coalition partners work to achieve unity of purpose. The model relies on each partner to collaborate at every stage of the cycle. It applies to interagency and intergovernmental partnerships as well as to humanitarian assistance and armed conflict.

### **Assess Organizational/Individual Position.**

A deliberate demand is a directive or mission order. An unanticipated demand is the result of an environmental condition that the organization does not directly control. Unanticipated demands, both internal and external to the partnership, affect the organization or individual's position.

Emanating from disparate cultures and working within the constraints of differing political pressures, coalition forces find their influence and capability limited by the degree of risk their political leaders are willing to take. For example, coalition forces have departed Afghanistan due to political pressure, not military success. A decision to participate in a partnership requires preparing for the inevitable culture clash that will ensue when two or more cultures interact, and two or more competing political agendas collide.

**Learn and Change.** To facilitate interoperability, partner forces should focus on leader training and education before considering operational compatibility.

**Adapt and implement new practices.** With requirements determined, partner leaders must decide on the necessary reconfiguration of individual thinking, collective reorganization, resource reallocation, individual and collective retraining, and the appropriate curricula for the impending collaboration and partnership. True partnership is the sharing of control, and the ramifications of this are far-reaching. They extend from the lowest level organization through the heights of national and political leadership. Decentralized operations involve more than just dispersing troops. Leaders must go beyond simply disseminating their intent and actually abdicate control of operational outcomes to subordinate leaders.

**Recognize transition signals.** Complacency is a coalition's worst enemy. The human brain seeks to simplify and categorize experiences in an effort to obtain clear answers to complex challenges. Resistance to change is a natural intuitive response and must be addressed when it manifests itself as reluctance to recognize signals that broadcast the need for campaign reconfiguration. The unwillingness to reconfigure a campaign can spell failure.

The development of leaders to meet the needs dictated by environmental conditions must contain an underlying awareness and expectation that pursuing organizational purpose will include coalition partners of some kind and number. The speed of change caused by ever-increasing high rates of information transference in an age of transparency hastens the need for coalition partners to develop effective unity of purpose as quickly as critical thinking leaders are able. **MR**