



After the closure of Camp Colt, Pennsylvania, in late 1918, Lt. Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower (*standing in front of the tank*) continued serving with the Tank Corps until 1922, when he left Camp Meade, Maryland (where this photograph was taken), to serve as executive officer for the 20th Infantry Brigade in the Panama Canal Zone. (Photo courtesy of the Eisenhower Presidential Library)

With All Due Respect

How to Foster Dissent in the U.S. Army

Lt. Col. Matthew Jamison, U.S. Army

Professional discourse is not limited simply to writing and publishing articles. In fact, the presence of healthy dialogue and debate about military matters is key to critical thinking and supports

the effectiveness of military units. However, this dialogue often does not happen organically. Instead, it must be encouraged in the form of a culture that supports dissent. This article addresses the importance

of dissent, considers ways to dissent effectively, and offers concrete examples for fostering dissent within an organization.

Importance of Dissent

Just as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff provides his best military advice to the president of the United States, military leaders owe informed and honest feedback to their bosses, whether in the context of national defense or internal military matters. Providing your best advice likely means challenging the status quo at times and offering alternative perspectives, which is critical for sound decision-making and planning at all levels. Dissent can play a vital role in ensuring that leaders consider all aspects of a situation before making decisions.

Dissent informs decision-making, offering a vital feedback mechanism to leaders. The on-the-ground commander often has a clearer perspective of available resources or the impact of a decision than the senior officer operating at the ten-thousand-foot level. It is his duty to offer that perspective, especially if it contradicts prevailing opinions. The more serious the issue, the more forceful the dissent should be. Once a final decision is made, however, subordinates must fully support the selected course of action.

Thoughtful dissent counters groupthink. Leaders who are surrounded by “yes men” will not be effective. Numerous historical examples demonstrate the negative consequences of failing to raise or effectively communicate dissenting opinions in the moment. H. R. McMaster’s excellent work, *Dereliction of Duty*, details the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s failure to “articulate effectively either their objections or alternatives” at the onset of

A Tank Discussion

By Captain D. D. Eisenhower (Tanks), Infantry

THE ARMY Reorganization Act of June 4 provides that hereafter tanks will be a part of the Infantry Arm of the Service. It therefore becomes increasingly important for infantry officers to study the question of tanks; their capabilities, limitations, and consequent possibilities of future employment.

The tank, as a self-propelling, caterpillar type of weapon, was a development of the late war. Many officers who served with fighting divisions never had an opportunity to take part in an action supported by these machines, and their knowledge of the power and deficiencies of the tank is based on hearsay. Others took part in such combats when the tanks were improperly used, poorly manned, or under such adverse conditions that they were practically helpless in trying to lend efficient aid to the Infantry. As the number of American-manned tanks that actually got to take part in the fighting with American divisions was very small, the number of officers of the Army who are openly advocates of this machine as a supporting weapon is correspondingly few.

As a result of these circumstances a great many officers are prone to denounce the tank as a freak development of trench warfare which has already outlived its usefulness. Others, and this class seems to be in the majority, have come into contact with the tank so infrequently, and have heard so little either decidedly for or against it, that they simply ignore it in their calculations and mental pictures of future battles.

Believing that the man that follows this course of thinking is falling into a grievous error, this paper is yet no brief to try to convince a skeptical reader that tanks won the war. Tanks did not, and no one knows this better than the officers who commanded them. And just as emphatically no other particular auxiliary arm won the war. The Infantry, aided and abetted by these various arms, did, however, and it is safe to say that, lacking any one of them, the task of the Infantry would have been much more difficult. The sole purpose then of any discussion along these lines is to place such facts before the officer as will enable him to determine by sane and sound reasoning whether in future wars the tanks will be a profitable adjunct to the Infantry.

Briefly, the general capabilities and limitations of the tank are as follows:

- (a) It can cross ordinary trenches and shell-pitted ground.
- (b) It can demolish entanglements, and make lanes through wire for our Infantry.
- (c) It can destroy by gunfire or by its weight pill boxes, machine-gun nests, etc.
- (d) It can, by gunfire, force opposing Infantry to seek shelter in dugouts, etc., until our Infantry can come up and occupy the position.
- (e) It provides protection to its crew from small-arms fire, shrapnel, and anything except direct hit from any sized cannon.

453

While serving with the 305th Tank Brigade at Fort Meade, Maryland, then Capt. Dwight D. Eisenhower collaborated with other colleagues to develop new concepts for employment of armor in warfare. He attempted to articulate leading-edge ideas of speed-oriented offensive tank warfare through written articles but encountered bitter opposition from senior infantry officers, who considered tanks as having utility only in a supporting role. On publication of the article in the November 1920 issue of *Infantry Journal*, he was threatened with court-martial by Maj. Gen. Charles S. Farnsworth, chief of infantry, who instructed him to stop promoting concepts many senior leaders deemed heretical to the proper role of the infantry. The full article can be read online at <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll7/id/799/>.

the Vietnam War.¹ Conversely, David Margolick’s “The Night of the Generals” addresses six retired general officers who spoke out against the conduct of the Iraq War, though they failed to do so while in uniform and in a position to affect change.²

Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations

Brigadier Nigel R.F. Aylwin-Foster, British Army

A virtue of having coalition partners with a legacy of shared sacrifice during difficult military campaigns is that they can also share candid observations. Such observations are understood to be professional exchanges among friends to promote constructive discussion that can improve the prospects of the coalition successes for which all strive. It was in a constructive spirit, then, that this article was made available to Military Review. The article is a professional commentary by an experienced officer based on his experiences and background. It should also be understood that publishing this article does not imply endorsement of or agreement with its observations by the Combined Arms Center leadership or Military Review. Indeed, some comments are already dated and no longer valid. Nonetheless, this article does provide Military Review readers the thought-provoking assessments of a senior officer with significant experience in counterterrorism operations. And it is offered in that vein—to stimulate discussion.—Editor

Few could fail to be impressed by the speed and style of the U.S. dominated Coalition victory over Saddam's forces in spring 2003. At the time, it appeared, to sceptics and supporters alike, that the most ambitious military action in the post Cold War era had paid off, and there was an air of heady expectation of things to come. Much of the credit lies rightly with the U.S. Army, which seemed entirely attuned morally, conceptually and physically to the political intent it served.¹

In contrast, 2 years later, notwithstanding ostensible campaign successes such as the elections of January 2005, Iraq is in the grip of a vicious and tenacious insurgency. Few would suggest Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) has followed the path intended by U.S. President George W. Bush when he committed U.S. forces. Pentagon and other Administration staff acknowledge that a moment of opportunity was missed immediately after the toppling of Saddam's regime; that fleeting chance to restore law and order, maintain the momentum, nurture popular support and thus extinguish the inevitable seeds of insurgency sown amongst the ousted ruling elite.

This is a reprint of an article originally published in the "Seaford House Papers" and retains its original punctuation, spelling, grammar, and paragraphing. The views herein do not reflect those of the United Kingdom, the U.S. Army, or Military Review.—Editor

MILITARY REVIEW • November-December 2005, p2

27

Today, the Coalition is resented by many Iraqis, whilst analysis of attack trends since mid 2003 shows that Coalition forces formed the bulk of the insurgents' target set throughout 2004. In short, despite political and military leaders' justifiable claims of achievement against tough odds, others claim, justifiably on the face of it, that the Coalition has failed to capitalise on initial success.

This change in fortune has been attributed to many factors. The Iraq undertaking was, in any case, 'forbiddingly difficult' and might not have seemed as appealing had the U.S. forces not recently achieved a sudden and decisive victory over Taliban forces in Afghanistan.² Inadequate attention was paid to planning for OIF Phase 4, including Security Sector Reform (SSR), arising in part, according to at least one source, from frictions in the Administration.³ The CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority] decisions to disband the senior levels of the Baath Party and the entire old Iraqi Army, thus effectively disenfranchising those most likely to resent the new order, have also attracted much criticism. Some argue, however, that the Coalition military, particularly the U.S. Army, were partly to blame, citing aspects of their performance since the cessation of formal hostilities and commencement of Phase 4 of the operation.⁴ Indeed, some serving U.S. Army and DOD personnel acknowledge that whilst the Army is indisputably the master of conventional warfighting, it is notably less

- *Do your homework.* Be prepared to clearly articulate why you disagree. If you are unable to complete an assigned mission, explain the disconnect between available resources and mission requirements. Why are you unable to complete the task? What would work better and why? If you need more time, when will your readiness change?
- *Garner support.* Group dissent can be powerful. When several leaders join to express their disagreement with a decision, it can prompt rethinking.

These same rules apply whether you are disagreeing with a supervisor's decision or writing an article that challenges Army doctrine or conventional practices.

Dissent in Writing

It is a good feeling when you collect your thoughts, build a coalition, and get your boss to change his mind, driving change within your organization. However, the impact of your words can go much further. As the adage goes, "the pen is mightier than the sword." As such, your ideas have greater impact as more people are exposed to them. Writing is the best way to get your message out and create a powerful, lasting impact.

I have personally pushed back on the status quo in my own writing. When a teammate brought up an article by a senior leader that neither of us agreed with, I decided to craft a response. This article about the framing of officer experiences in the military was co-authored by a lieutenant general and several members of his staff.³ I recognized that I might need to tread lightly, but I also knew that my position was rooted in professional disagreement, not personal animus. I was in touch with numerous junior officers through frequent counseling and understood their concerns. I shared my perspective through a response in *Military Review* and received very positive feedback.⁴

In my most recent article on command declination, I raised issues and provided recommendations that might make some leaders uncomfortable.⁵ But this also generated valuable discussion and led to great interactions with leaders whom I had not known previously.

What can you take away from this for your own writing? I applied similar lessons as previously noted for effective dissent. I knew my audience and crafted my article to reach it; in the response article, it was the junior officers who wanted to feel heard from a "senior leader," while the command declination piece addressed

Reprinted in the November-December 2005 edition of *Military Review*, this article by British Brigadier Nigel R. F. Aylwin-Foster provided a blunt critique regarding what the author perceived as U.S. mistakes in the conduct of counterterrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan during the early phases of the Global War on Terrorism. The article provoked extensive spirited debate within the U.S. military at the time and fostered intense internal scrutiny and attempts at productive change. Read "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations" online at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/PDF-UA-docs/Aylwin-Foster-Nov-Dec-2005-UA.pdf>.

Effective Dissent

The best way to dissent differs based on the context. When feedback is requested in a public setting, dissent can be provided publicly; otherwise, it may be best saved for private discussion. Regardless of how you choose to offer dissent, it is important that you separate any personal feelings from professional considerations. Professional disagreement is key to ensuring an ongoing healthy dialogue, while personal attacks encourage defensiveness and loss of trust.

- *Know your audience.* Consider how your boss receives information. If your boss gets defensive, keep your feedback private; he or she will not want to be challenged publicly.

talent management concerns and was intended for those senior leaders directly. I did my homework and garnered support; my article on command declination incorporated research, interviews with senior leaders, and a survey of all air defense artillery majors and lieutenant colonels. With a 62 percent response rate, I was able to share analysis that clearly captured the considerations of that group. Shared at the unit level, my ideas led to a couple of good conversations. Shared through my writing, these same thoughts have driven much broader discussion and debate.

Encouraging Dissent

Unit culture is critical to encouraging dissent. The hierarchy inherent in the Army's rank structure can discourage dissent and cause fear of repercussion if viewed as insubordination. It is incumbent upon leaders to create an environment that not only treats everyone with dignity and respect but also recognizes the value of diverse perspectives from soldiers of all ranks and levels of experience. Soldiers who are not comfortable in an organization will likely be unwilling to share their good ideas or differing opinions. As chief of staff of the Army, Gen. Randy George is taking steps to establish just this type of culture across the force, indicating a need to "strengthen our profession from top to bottom by building expertise through written discourse."⁶ An environment that supports the sharing of diverse ideas and a willingness to improve will start to encourage dissent at the institutional level.

OK, so dissent is important; how can you encourage it at your level? It starts by increasing feedback mechanisms. Here are three simple ways to encourage dissent within an organization:

- *Bridge the rank gap.* As a battalion commander, I started a Junior Enlisted Leadership Council in which a small group of highly motivated junior soldiers engaged directly with the battalion commander and command sergeant major. This forum provided them with an opportunity for mentorship and got them comfortable providing feedback on issues that were important to them, leading to new ideas that had a positive impact on the organization.
- *Ask for input.* This sounds intuitive, but in a decision brief or similar venue, specifically ask each person what they think rather than issuing



The issue of suicide is "emotional, painful, and complicated," as President Obama put it in a speech during August 2011 in announcing that he would extend official condolences to the families of military personnel who kill themselves. Army Capt. D.J. Skelton was among the dissenting voices on the issue. Skelton lost his left eye and the use of his left arm after an RPG attack in Fallujah, Iraq. (Photo by Fred Baker, Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs)

Leveraging the Power of Loyal Dissent in the U.S. Army

Maj. Thomas B. Craig, U.S. Army

Loyal dissent is usually expressed as carefully thought-out, well-intentioned, usually verbal action designed to help an entire organization or a particular leader perform better and accomplish

its mission more successfully. Loyal dissent presents a leader with an alternate idea or a different solution to a problem, sometimes even after a leader has issued orders or made his or her decision. Truly loyal dissent

MILITARY REVIEW November-December 2014

97

Maj. Thomas B. Craig provides a brief tutorial on what he asserts is the tradition and usefulness of loyal dissent in the military. Read "Leveraging the Power of Loyal Dissent in the U.S. Army" from the November-December 2014 edition of *Military Review* online at https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20141231_art016.pdf.

a general call for input. People are more likely to share their opinions when engaged directly.

- *Counseling and mentorship.* Be clear about what information you want from subordinates and let them know how you will use it. I specifically told every staff officer that I counted on them to inform my decision-making. I also told every warrant officer that I saw them as a trusted advisor and that I expected the unvarnished truth from them. Those who provided it proved extremely valuable, and regular dialogue with them provided diverse perspectives.

Lt. Col. Matthew Jamison, U.S. Army, serves as the chief of missile defense policy for the Joint Staff J-5. He holds a BA from Hampden-Sydney College, an MA from the University of Texas at El Paso, and an MA from Johns Hopkins University.

Conclusion

While this broader edition of *Military Review* focuses on writing, fostering a culture that encourages dissent is critical. Military units benefit when individuals are comfortable providing feedback. Fostering

dissent shows that all perspectives have value, encourages critical thinking, and helps leaders make better decisions. By promoting this behavior, more individuals will apply these principles in their writing along with their everyday interactions. ■

Notes

1. H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 327.

2. David Margolick, "The Night of the Generals," *Vanity Fair*, April 2007, <https://archive.vanityfair.com/article/2007/4/the-night-of-the-generals>.

3. Milford H. Beagle Jr. et al., "We Hear You!" *Military Review* Online Exclusive, 27 March 2023, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/journals/military-review/online-exclusive/2023-ole/we-hear-you/>.

4. Matthew L. Jamison, "We Hear You, But You're Wrong," *Military Review* Online Exclusive, 13 April 2023, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/journals/military-review/online-exclusive/2023-ole/jamison/>.

5. Matthew L. Jamison, "Soldiers Deserve Outstanding Leadership: Examining the Battalion Command Crisis within the U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery," *Military Review* Online Exclusive, 3 May 2024, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/journals/military-review/online-exclusive/2024-ole/soldiers-deserve-outstanding-leadership/>.

6. Randy George, Gary Brito, and Michael Weimer, "Strengthening the Profession: A Call to All Army Leaders to Revitalize our Professional Discourse," *Modern War Institute*, 11 September 2023, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/strengthening-the-profession-a-call-to-all-army-leaders-to-revitalize-our-professional-discourse/>.

Disruption Is the Key to Delivering the Army of 20XX

Lt. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr., U.S. Army

The chief of staff of the Army has deemed continuous transformation as one of his four focus areas. To understand what and how to contribute to continuous transformation, leaders at multiple levels require a common understanding of the fundamental elements necessary to transform and drive perpetual change. Restoring author Charlene Li explains that transforming organizations do so through a path designed for the "future customer," which requires "leadership that creates a movement to drive and sustain transformation ... and a culture that thrives on disruptive change."

Disruptive transformation "isn't only about innovation or technology." It is largely a mindset and behavior change among leadership teams. In other words, it sets up organizations to thrive in a disruptive world. We must view the future battlefield as a disruptive world, and in doing so, leaders at multiple levels will be wise to heed a comment made by N. R. Narayana Murthy, cofounder of Infosys: "Growth is painful. Change is painful. But, nothing is as painful as staying stuck where you do not belong." The changing nature of war and the creative use of technology makes future battlefields transparent,

extended, and even more complex. It is the mindset of embracing change, new ideas, and the associated behaviors such as creativity, cooperation, and collaboration that will enable continuous transformation.

By 2030, the Army will field a new force capable of winning on the future battlefield against a variety of threats. Despite resource constraints that include time, money, and people with competing global force demands, rapid transformation is a tall task but not out of reach. To transform, we must disrupt the status quo. Creativity, cooperation, and collaboration at multiple levels in our Army are the fundamental elements needed to produce formations at echelons capable of winning our next battles and engagements.

Creativity

Creativity enables the ability to expand problems to an extent that new or alternative solutions tend to jump out. Disruptive transformation relies on thinking bigger not smaller, accurately capturing risk, and seeing as deeply into the future as possible. The role of creativity in disruptive transformation will allow us to shed biases and apprehension while illuminating

Lt. Gen. Milford Beagle Jr., U.S. Army, is the commanding general of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center on Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he is responsible for integrating the modernization of the fielded Army across doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and policy. He has served in multiple leadership capacities from platoon through division levels, and his career deployments span the globe from Hawaii to the Republic of Korea. He previously served as the commanding general of 10th Mountain Division (Light). He holds a BS from South Carolina State University, an MS from Kansas State University, an MS from the School of Advanced Military Studies, and an MS from the Army War College.

MILITARY REVIEW ONLINE EXCLUSIVE · FEBRUARY 2024

1

Lt. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr. asserts that transformation is largely a mindset and behavior change among leadership teams that sets up organizations to thrive in a disruptive world. Read "Disruption Is the Key to Delivering the Army of 20XX," *Military Review* Online Exclusive, at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/journals/military-review/online-exclusive/2024-ole/disruption-is-the-key/>.