

COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

Owen Connelly: On War and Leadership

is published by Princeton University Press and copyrighted, © 2002, by Princeton University Press. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher, except for reading and browsing via the World Wide Web. Users are not permitted to mount this file on any network servers.

For COURSE PACK and other PERMISSIONS, refer to entry on previous page. For more information, send e-mail to permissions@pupress.princeton.edu

Introduction

THIS IS an anthology of the thoughts on leadership of combat commanders—twenty in all—over the past 250 years. Their written (or spoken) words are quoted from primary sources—translated where necessary. They are Western leaders, save Vo Nguyen Giap (a North Vietnamese general) and perhaps Moshe Dayan (an Israeli commander but European in culture and training). The views of warriors may help balance the scale of military thought, which, since the fall of Napoleon, has been tipped heavily toward theory by a surfeit of books, beginning with Carl von Clausewitz's *Vom Kriege* (1832)¹ and Antoine de Jomini's *Précis de l'art de la guerre* (1838).²

This collection should allow historians in general to try to discern (or divine) the commanders' ontological, epistemological, and teleological views (their hermeneutics are traditional), and surely be useful to military historians and their readers. It should also be of interest to people in all walks of life who make executive decisions, civil or military; they can compare their management and leadership ideas with those of military masters.

The leaders I have chosen all belong to what has been termed the “muddy boots” school of leadership.³ This, of course, reflects my personal predilection. Among my choices, personalities vary from charismatic to enigmatic to stern to outwardly hateful (e.g., Joseph Stilwell, called “Vinegar Joe”). *But these men all led from the front.* This was true of Frederick the Great, Napoleon, and the others, whether (at the time their leadership is examined) they were at the head of armies (Sherman, Rommel, Patton, Ridgway); brigades or corps (Stonewall Jackson), battalions (Harold Moore, Nick Vaux), or guerrilla bands (Lawrence of Arabia, John Mosby), or had experience at both lower and higher command (DeGaulle, Manstein, Slim, Montgomery, Moshe Dayan, Giap, and Schwarzkopf). They were all also improvisors, believers in single command, and mildly or flagrantly eccentric.

Naturally, not all worthy commanders are quoted herein. Another writer might have chosen differently, and surely many of the best left no records because they were killed or lacked the talent, inclination, or personality to write or dictate their ideas.⁴ The Elder Helmuth von Moltke does not figure in this collection because his chief work was perfecting the Prussian general staff. Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee of the American Civil War are passed over because neither addressed leadership issues in a forthright way; Sherman did and is included; he also represents what has been called the “American way of war.”⁵

Soviet Marshal Georgii Konstantinovich Zhukov, of World War II, is also omitted, because he attributes his successes to Josef Stalin and the Communist Party and his own leadership techniques are obscure. Vo Nguyen Giap shows the same tendencies as Zhukov, but is quoted, since he was both a Communist Party leader and North Vietnam's generalissimo—and also because of continuing American and Western interest in the Vietnam War. Other selections or exclusions were made on similar bases, or represent personal choices, or, in part, the urge to give voice to reviled commanders (e.g., Wavell and Stilwell), who did well, considering their circumstances, missions, and limited resources.

Some of our commanders (e.g., Stonewall Jackson, Erwin Rommel) fought in wars that were lost because their countries lacked effective political leadership, or economic resources, or industry, or manpower, or allies, or all of these. Others led their troops well, but lost because their societies were defeatist or defensive-minded (e.g., DeGaulle in France in 1940),⁶ or divided over support of a war (e.g., Schwarzkopf—among hundreds of other dedicated officers and NCOs—as a battalion commander in Vietnam).

All were effective *in their time*, in their war, with the troops they led. I have put the commanders in chronological order because it seemed better to attach commanders to particular wars, of which readers would have some knowledge, rather than put them in categories. For example, a guerrilla category would include Mosby and Lawrence; there were similarities in their operations, but their wars and the societies and cultures that produced the commanders and their troops were radically different. Mosby and his rangers and rebel sympathizers are presented in the context of the American Civil War, and Lawrence and his Bedouins that of the First World War in the Middle East. In all cases, the sociocultural milieu of troops—especially in mass warfare—has had a marked effect on national or coalition power.

Of course *there have been dramatic changes in war* over more than two centuries, which must be taken into account. As governments and societies changed, so did war. Populations increased worldwide—44 to 100% in European nations during the eighteenth century—and the trend continued, agriculture became more technical, enabling ever fewer farmers to feed nations; labor was available for industry, and opportunity bred entrepreneurs. Ever larger armies could be fed and equipped. The same developments spawned democratic revolutions.⁷ With the spread of democracy, governments, whether authoritarian or representative, felt justified to draft citizens to fight and to demand universal support of war efforts. As scientific and technical knowledge and industrial skill and capacity increased, armed forces took advantage of new “tools of war.” Wars have accelerated discovery and innovation when nations have put their resources behind research. For example, the development of nuclear power, space exploration, and satellite communication since 1945 has been based on advances in nuclear science, electronics, and rocketry during World War II.⁸

The Changing Nature of War

The major changes in warfare since 1740 have derived from or been necessitated by the ever burgeoning size of armed forces through World War II (1939–45), followed by the reduction since 1945 of forces *actually deployed*; improvements in weaponry, communications and transportation; and the escalating need for armies to cooperate closely with navies and air forces. The trend through 1945 was toward total war; since 1945, toward limited war. We shall treat these changes chronologically.

Frederick the Great never commanded over 90,000 men in the field, and won his greatest victories with forces of 25–35,000. Napoleon's battlefield forces seldom numbered more than 70,000—though his total forces were much larger. (For example, the *Grande Armée* that invaded Russia [1812] was 611,000 strong, but Napoleon fought the greatest battle, Borodino, with 130,000 men.) Mass armies were raised first in revolutionary France by the *levée en masse* (1793), linked to the dictum that male citizens had a duty to fight for their country. (In 1794, French forces peaked at 800,000 [1,000,000 on paper], then declined.)⁹ Conscription was continued by Napoleon, who liked to identify with the Revolution: "The Imperial Guard always marched to the *Marseillaise*."¹⁰

Neither the generals of the Revolution nor Napoleon could maneuver great masses of troops, however, given the primitive state of communications; nor could their economies support them. Neither could the generals of France's enemies who matched her field armies in size largely by traditional means.¹¹

Weapons of this period were short-range: infantry muskets had a maximum range of 200–300 yards,¹² field artillery, 1,000 yards.¹³ Horses pulled the cannon and supply wagons, and were mounts for officers, cavalry, and men of the horse artillery.¹⁴ Commanders could *see* the whole battlefield—from one high hill or with a little galloping about. Communication was by messenger or visual or sound signal.¹⁵

In the American Civil War (1861–65), the Union fielded 2,300,000 men and the Confederacy 1,000,000—both using the draft.¹⁶ The Spencer and Sharps carbines (.56) were used by the Union cavalry. A few Union infantry units had the Sharps rifle (.52), and some the Springfield rifled musket (.58), but the infantry on both sides fought mostly with smooth-bore muskets. The officers and cavalry had Colt and Remington six-shot pistols (.44 revolvers). Confederate officers' favorite was the nonissue .40 Lemat revolver, nine shot, with a shotgun barrel in the center. The Union army had a crude machine gun, the Gatling gun, with six rotating barrels. Rifled artillery was available, some breech-loading, as well as smooth-bore "Napoleons";¹⁷ but all fire was still direct, at visible targets, and remained so until end of the century, so that often guns were judged by power, not range. Infantry used hand grenades, mines, and booby traps. Both sides transported troops by rail and communicated via electric telegraph. Generals (with exceptions) learned to stay out of artillery range.

In the nineteenth century, most western nations adopted conscription (the British not until 1916). During this time the Prussians devised a means to command mass armies—the *Grosse Generalstab* (Great General Staff), “perfected” by General (later Field Marshal) Helmuth von Moltke while chief of staff (1857–88). He used it to plan and win seemingly effortless victories over Austria in 1866 and France in 1870–71.¹⁸ Moltke’s triumphs convinced other powers to adopt the staff system, modified according to national inclinations.¹⁹

In *World War I (1914–18)* conscription produced the largest armies the world had yet seen. The British Empire mustered 8.9 million troops; France 8.4 million; the United States 4.4 million; Russia 12 million; and Germany 11 million. For the first time in large numbers, women had an official role, chiefly as nurses.

World War I saw the advent of the tank—clumsy and undependable, but able to roll over barbed wire and trenches. (On 20 November 1917, at Cambrai, 324 tanks led a British attack; by day’s end over 300 were out of action—most of them broken down.) Horse cavalry was deployed, but was effective only in the Middle East and occasionally on the Russian front. The infantry had long-range magazine-fed rifles and belt-fed machine guns.²⁰ Field artillery and high-trajectory howitzers fired millions of high-explosive rounds on and behind enemy lines before attacks.²¹ Both sides came to use poison gas. Airplanes and dirigibles were employed for observation, then as fighters and bombers. The aircraft were fragile but inspired hope in proponents of airpower. Glory went to fighter pilots,²² but aircraft also supported ground action.²³

Communication was by messenger (horse or motorcycle), telegraph, semaphore, and primitive radio. Horse- or oxen-drawn wagons, motorized trucks, and railroads carried supplies and troops.

Generals on both sides—down to division level—made few or no trips to the front lines, and commanded through staffs. Leadership was the most impersonal in history. Casualties were enormous.²⁴

In *World War II (1939–45)* more men (and women) were mobilized than in the Great War. The United States mustered 14.9 million men and women; the British Empire raised 6.2 million; the USSR 25 million; Germany 12.5 million; Japan 7.5 million. Battle casualties were light for the western allies, but more civilians were killed than during World War I.²⁵ Many women entered the armed forces to fill noncombat positions. The U.S. Army Air Force had hundreds of women pilots, some of whom had such hazardous duty as flying aircraft from the United States to the war zones. The USSR had women in combat roles; their fighter pilots made an astonishing record.²⁶

Tanks dominated the battlefield where terrain and weather allowed.²⁷ The German “Tiger” tank (88mm gun) was arguably the best, but came late and in small numbers. Infantry had improved magazine-fed rifles, carbines, grenades, mortars, the United States a 2.36 inch “bazooka” (shoulder-fired anti-tank rocket), and flamethrowers. German infantry had effective anti-tank guns. Heavy artillery could hit targets far behind enemy lines, light artillery in the opponent’s rear.²⁸ The Germans had heavy *nebelwerfer* (rocket artillery).²⁹ Late

in the war, U.S. and British four-engine bombers—1,000 or more, day and night—struck deep into Europe; larger U.S. B-29 bombers hit Japan. Allied fighters escorted bombers, tangled with German and Japanese aircraft, and supported ground troops. For the invasion of Normandy, the Allies put up over 5,000 bombers and 3,500 fighters. The Germans, with 1,424 aircraft of all types, were overwhelmed, although since late 1944 they had sent up 500 mph jet fighters, superior to anything flying. Their V-1 and V-2 rockets with heavy explosive warheads terrorized London in 1944. Naval aircraft carriers played a key role in the war against Japan, and helped elsewhere.

British and American cryptanalysts broke the German and Japanese military codes, which gave Allied commanders—ground, air, and naval—advance knowledge of enemy moves.³⁰ British technicians had invented radar to detect incoming aircraft and sonar to detect submarines before the war. The United States developed the atomic bomb; two, dropped on Japan in 1945, ended the war in Asia.³¹

The general and lower staffs were still standard, and had become even larger, but had less authority in operations, and more in logistical and personnel matters. The high commanders had been young officers in the Great War, and knew the hazards of the system. With vastly improved vehicles, tanks, aircraft, and weapons, strategists introduced maneuver back into the war. Generals had to handle both ground and air forces, make use of airborne troops, and cooperate with the navies. Command of the air and often the sea became mandatory for victory, although the war was still won by infantry, greatly aided by tanks, artillery, and fighter planes. There were superb commanders at army level who led personally, did their own reconnaissance, and trusted their intuition. (See chapters VII [Rommel] and VIII [Patton].)

Hardly had World War II ended when the “Cold War” (1949–89) began. It evolved into a standoff between the two major nuclear powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Neither power was willing to risk war involving atomic weapons—even small “tactical” ones. Giant steps were made in technology; both nations developed rockets and guided missiles and put satellites into orbit—for general use and intelligence—and sent men into space. Both developed nuclear-powered naval vessels, including submarines capable of launching intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

The real wars were either conventional and small-scale (e.g., the Arab-Israeli conflicts; the Falklands War) or ultimately fought for limited objectives (the Korean and Vietnam wars, both terminated by negotiation and without victory). Forces were reduced accordingly.

The *Korean War* (1950–53) pitted the forces of the Republic of (South) Korea, aided by United Nations (mainly U.S.) forces, against those of the People’s Republic of (North) Korea, reinforced by Chinese units. The maximum strength of UN forces was about 500,000—two-thirds ground forces, eventually well equipped and supported by USAF and USN fighters and bombers and occasionally naval fire.

American infantry went in with World War II weapons, which sufficed, with

some additions.³² Helicopters were used for medical evacuation. New USAF jet aircraft took control of the skies, but were too fast to give the infantry accurate support; slower World War II fighters did the job. The U.S. Navy controlled the seas from the start. Transport included aircraft, railroad, trucks, and jeeps. It was a war of fronts until 1952, when lines of trenches and emplacements were built on both sides of a frequently violated DMZ (demilitarized zone) at the 38th parallel, during “peace talks.” African-Americans, assigned to segregated units in previous wars, were integrated into formations of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force for the first time.

After a very rocky start, leadership was personal, selfless, and inventive. Allies fielded elite units, notably British Commonwealth, French, and Turkish forces.

The war ended with the restoration of the (South) Korean Republic; an armistice was signed in July 1953, but no peace treaty. American and ROK troops remain in the DMZ today (2002).

The *Vietnam War (1964–73)* began after a decade of U.S. assistance to the anti-Communist (South) Vietnamese Republic and army (ARVN). U.S. forces were drawn into the ARVN antiguerrilla campaign, and in 1965 into war with the Peoples’ Republic of (North) Vietnam.

At peak U.S. forces in this war numbered about 500,000. In nine years of fighting, some 3,000,000, many draftees, served tours of one year or less in Vietnam, mostly in ground forces.³³ Women and African-Americans were prominently represented. Conscription was abolished in the United States after this war.

American forces were well equipped throughout. Helicopters came into their own as gunships and cargo and troop carriers.³⁴ The infantry had improved rifles and machine guns, grenades, and the monster M-79 grenade launcher. They were backed by artillery, Army gunships, and USAF and USN planes.³⁵ The latter took control of the air, and at times heavy bombers struck at targets in North Vietnam and Cambodia. Tanks were of little use in the jungle. It was an infantry war; men moved in by air and on foot, and by truck in rear areas. Actions ranged from patrols to company and battalion “sweeps” to brief larger engagements. There were no fronts.

Generals normally visited by helicopter, or flew overhead and talked to lower commanders by radio. The more effective brigade and division commanders landed most often in battle zones. Leadership was good throughout at the fighting level, but became increasingly difficult as American society turned against the war. (See chapters XVII [Moore] and XIX [Schwarzkopf].) US forces never lost a major battle.

Washington opted to end the war by negotiation, and technically succeeded. All U.S. forces withdrew (late 1972), leaving the Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam armed to defend the country. But the ARVN was demolished by the Peoples’ Army of (North) Vietnam (PAVN), which attacked and unified Vietnam in 1975.

In the *Persian Gulf War (1991)*, U.S. and allied forces totalled 500,000 men and women—roughly 250,000 army, 80,000 air force, and 170,000 navy and

marines, including U.S. reserve and National Guard units. Iraq had almost 600,000 men, virtually all ground troops. The U.S. infantry had improved versions of Vietnam-era weapons, plus new tank-killing guided missiles,³⁶ and moved in armored personnel carriers or infantry fighting vehicles (APCs or IFVs).³⁷ U.S. tanks mounted 105 and 120mm guns (plus machine guns). Artillery had heavy guns,³⁸ plus 12-barrel multiple rocket launchers, with computer fire control, launching projectiles of up to 334 pounds. Attack helicopters could launch up to 70 rockets. Ground forces were backed by USAF, USN, and allied fighters with advanced computer targeted and guided projectiles.³⁹

Iraq was defeated in “100 hours”—24–27 February 1991—by the forces of the United States and her allies, after a lengthy air campaign. Allied armament overwhelmed the enemy. Leadership was professional, by the book, heavily dependent on staffs, and undramatic but effective. American officers took pains to see that the United States did not get into another “Vietnam situation.”⁴⁰

In the Gulf War the Allied force, although considered small, numbered more than the maximum Napoleon had on any battlefield (190,000, at Wagram, 1809).⁴¹ Practically speaking, there was no limit to the range of weapons—taken all together. Every part of the enemy’s homeland could be hit by artillery or aircraft rockets. The generals in command could view any given part of the battle via television; USAF commander General Charles Horner had such a good view and good radio connections with his aircraft that he could have micromanaged the air war, but declined to do so.⁴² A U.S. infantry battalion in the Gulf had more than the firepower of Napoleon’s entire *Grande Armée* of 1812. Napoleon had foot soldiers, horse-drawn artillery, and cavalry on horses that had to be rested frequently to be effective. In the Gulf, infantry went forward in tracked vehicles, the First Cavalry Division in helicopters. Tanks and self-propelled artillery kept pace. Aircraft, on instant call by radio, prepared the way and supported the ground forces. General Norman Schwarzkopf’s task was far from simple, all the same. He had to know the capabilities and limitations of all his troops and their weapons, including Allied contingents. He had to execute on a front of over 600 miles what would have been a tactical envelopment for Napoleon on a front of perhaps five miles—holding on his right while delivering a massive left hook that penetrated the enemy rear.

About This Book

This book reveals much about the mind of the warrior, a player in every nation’s life—his views on life, death, loyalty, duty, honor, patriotism, religion, sending men into battle; the degrees of cruelty and kindness to troops necessary for discipline while building trust, loyalty, and camaraderie; the proper regard due troops’ families, and related matters. The commanders discuss problems of supply, the effectiveness of new weapons as they appear, when numbers count, the importance of airpower and sea power, and other matters.

The commanders quoted *in extenso* led troops who risked their lives in battle.

Such leaders are essential to victory—no matter how inspired the plans spun out at higher levels. Wars decide the fate of nations and the power balance in the world. That is a reality, however unpleasant. War has always been part of human history, and promises to continue to be; thus it should be fruitful to examine what successful military leaders have said, over the past 250 years, about how to lead men to victory.

The first chapter of this anthology gives, briskly, via aphorisms, the views of both Frederick the Great and Napoleon, to whom most of the our commanders express a debt.⁴³ Subsequent chapters are devoted to each of the other eighteen commanders. Each includes a short biographical sketch followed by passages quoted from their works (for which, in the cases of Jackson, Rommel, and Patton, their wives are greatly responsible) and for some, the writings of reliable associates.

Frederick, Napoleon, Montgomery, and some others left commentary or instructions intended to educate future leaders. Their thoughts have been organized under various headings. Some, like George Patton and Erich von Manstein, left a few disquisitions which can be so organized, but other parts of their *oeuvres* do not fit into neat categories, and have been left as written (except for editorial notations in *italics*). Others left only narrative accounts of their actions, interspersed with jottings in diaries or letters; Lawrence of Arabia, Erwin Rommel (for the most part), Moshe Dayan, Nick Vaux, and Norman Schwarzkopf are in this category. In such cases, a few headings have been added, but the narrative has been left undisturbed except when it was felt necessary to shorten certain sections; then summaries of intervening events have been supplied.

There are brief conclusions at the end of each chapter, but none make comparisons among commanders. The general conclusions at the end of the book discuss points of leadership on which all or most of them seem to agree, despite changes in the nature of war.

It is hoped that this book will find a readership. Perhaps it will also have a modest effect on how the “art of War” is taught, which would please a current resident of Valhalla, General George S. Patton, Jr., who wrote after World War II:

The horrid thought obtrudes itself that, in spite of my efforts . . . the tactics of the next war will be written by someone who never fought and who acquired his knowledge by a . . . study of the regulations of this and the last World War, none of which were ever put into practice in battle.⁴⁴

Bitter Root, Montana
1 April 2001