



**SIXTH
EDITION**



Military Leadership

IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Edited by

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FOREWORD BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL GREGORY S. NEWBOLD

**MILITARY
LEADERSHIP**

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S I X T H E D I T I O N



MILITARY LEADERSHIP

In Pursuit of Excellence

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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PART TWO

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PART FOUR

Colonel John Tien served as the primary battalion commander for a unit of 1,100 personnel responsible for the city of Tal Afar, Iraq, from February to October 2006. He served a similar role in the northern portion of Ramadi from October 2006 to February 2007. Colonel Tien holds a bachelor's degree from the US Military Academy and a master's degree from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes scholar. He has also been a White House fellow and a West Point political science professor, and he is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Colonel Tien was a national security fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School from 2007 to 2008. He currently serves as a director on the National Security Council staff in the White House.

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FOREWORD

God grant that men of principle shall be our principal men.

—*Thomas Jefferson*

By good grace and fortune, we are citizens of the United States—the greatest country in the world and its sole superpower. As Americans, we are generally secure from the troubles, disease, poverty, and danger that trouble many other countries. We live in considerable comfort. For citizens living in such security, the most natural pathway would be to pursue a career free of stress and sacrifice. Some small percentage of Americans, though, are drawn to the opposite: a life that requires discipline, selfless sacrifice, restricted liberties, sometimes long separations, and low compensation. Those who voluntarily follow this path embrace its challenges and its commitment to protect others. For this, they are declared “in the service.” It is an apt term. The Americans who accept this commitment do so willingly and recognize that danger, hardship, and low pay may be their due. They learn to put service before self and to subordinate their personal desires for the greater good of the organization. And make no mistake: America relies on these few citizens to a degree that is generally underappreciated.

The duty of these special citizens is so grave, and their obligations so important, that we make them swear an oath when they choose this path. The oath includes a pledge to “obey the orders” of those “appointed over them,” even though it may put their lives at risk. What could be more significant? In return, they expect something intangible: good leadership.

What a daunting privilege and solemn obligation this is for military leaders. When we are entrusted with the privilege and responsibility of leading such individuals, how can we repay their faith and sworn obligation to us? The prospect is both exciting and intimidating. For those who are intrigued, this book is for you.

What is good leadership? How can we acquire the skills? The study of leadership is a lifelong effort, but you can achieve a solid beginning to the journey by reading, reflecting on, and absorbing the observations in this book. Don't start the book without a tool to highlight and annotate—you should enjoy the material, but also study it with some intensity. As you read, imagine how you would react in the challenging circumstances outlined in the book. Test yourself with the physical, mental, and ethical issues. My view is that the study of leadership, particularly coupled with actual examples, begins to create a personal set of principles and benchmarks that will serve you well. You'll find that your instincts—honed through study and self-examination—bring clarity to leadership challenges that vex others.

This book is organized in a way best designed to condition and then stimulate your thinking about leadership. You'll understand leadership in its various forms in Part One. Note that the fundamentals of leadership are nearly eternal, and that form, style, and requirements often change. Part Two is a wonderful reinforcement that the soul of leadership is character. Some of the events and thoughts in these chapters should provoke critical thinking, while others may inspire. Part Three elevates the discussion to those whose leadership domain often involves the strategic and engagements with the political—generals and admirals. This section of the book is deliberately and carefully crafted to ensure that the reader knows that increased rank involves increased consequences to actions, and that courage—a central tenet of leadership—takes on a meaning beyond the physical. Finally, you will note that Part Four stimulates the reader to think about how future military leadership will shift the importance of several leadership traits (agile and independent thinking, for example) without losing the necessity of the others.

And what of my own thoughts on leadership? Although it's been over thirty years since I first faced the daunting challenges of leading a unit, I still remember the traits and actions that seemed to gain the respect of the platoon of sixty-five Marines. I also remember vividly where I erred. Though much has changed in the intervening years (except my propensity for errors), I believe that many of the tenets of good leadership are eternal. You'll find them in the counsel of the ancients and repeated through the crucibles those in today's military face. My reflections may contain no great wisdom, but perhaps if they are repeated elsewhere they will at least gain weight through the lessons of experience.

Mission. The first responsibility of a leader is to the task at hand. If you are competent in all other attributes but fall short in this one, you will fail overall.

Loyalty. Traditional notions of loyalty envision the loyalty of a subordinate to a senior. In military leadership, they must apply equally. If the balance is skewed, those who are expected to follow you will do so only out of obligation, or you'll devote too little emphasis on the mission and will fail to accomplish it.

Listen. No leader can have all the insights needed to make decisions, so the good ones listen to the counsel of their subordinates. This not only is smart but also encourages those in your organization to contribute more fully.

Act. After listening to others, decide quickly. Indecisiveness will quickly dissipate others' confidence in your leadership.

**An army of deer led by a lion is more to be feared
than an army of lions led by a deer.**

—Chabrias 410–375 BC

Fairness. Leadership frequently involves making decisions or taking actions in which someone loses or is perceived to have suffered. The pain of losing is made acceptable only by an impression that the action was taken with a sense of fairness.

Knowledge. Though you can't know all that is essential in performing your duties, your organization will note how diligently you study and absorb the essential ingredients of the job. If you can apply this knowledge to improving the organization and its people, all the better.

Example. Those in your charge expect you to embody the essential traits and ethos of your organization. "Standards" are not sufficient for a leader—the two terms are distinct and different. As a leader, you are expected to exceed standards. You are expected to lead by example.

Presence. The mantle of leadership invariably entails instances in which you will be obliged to rule against one person or the other or make a decision that may cause hardship. Although your goal is to gain the respect—even the affection—of those in your charge, friendship is in neither their interest nor yours.

Honor. A leader's moral compass is her or his sense of honor. Just as a journey without a compass can lead to a wrong destination, a compromise of honor will surely lead your organization—and your credibility as a leader—astray. The shorthand among those you will be charged to lead is revealing—"not only doing it right, but doing the right thing." A special note on honesty: Nothing is more injurious to the credibility of a leader than a

perception that someone is less than honest. This trait is binary. You are honest, or you are dishonest. If you are perceived as dishonest, you'll probably never recover your subordinates' full confidence.

Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.

—*General H. Norman Schwarzkopf*

Seek no credit. Those in your charge will observe closely who takes credit for actions. We've all known individuals who were quick to take credit and equally agile in avoiding responsibility. This trait is closely tied to how loyal your individuals perceive you to be, and how loyal they are to you.

A good leader inspires others with confidence in him; a great leader inspires them with confidence in themselves.

—*Unknown*

Praise in public; counsel in private. Almost without exception, this advice should be heeded studiously. Remember that those who berate in public probably lose esteem to the same degree as those berated.

Now . . . it's time to start the book and learn the lessons from distinguished authors. But before you do, establish an objective in mind. When you close the final page in the chapter on the Future of Military Leadership, what would you like the result to be? If the answer is to take an incremental step in becoming a better person and a more effective leader, then you'd better be ready to highlight and scribble notes. It's that important.

You can assign someone to a leadership position, but no one will ever really be a leader until their appointment is ratified in the hearts and minds of their soldiers.

—*Anonymous*

—LIEUTENANT GENERAL GREGORY S. NEWBOLD (USMC RET.)

Lieutenant General Gregory S. Newbold previously served as the Director of Operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and as the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division.

PREFACE

This book is substantially different from prior editions in that we have included only six articles from previous editions. Four of the new selections are original pieces written for this book. We also discovered two very interesting books from the archives at Harvard University that provide comparative perspectives of military leadership from different eras. Contrasted with our choices for the fifth edition, we had a rich array of articles to review for this edition. We expanded our searches and uncovered nearly 160 articles written since the last edition in 2005 and selected what we believe to be the best articles to complement the important classics. Ultimately, we found that the decision of what to include came easily.

We continue to mix classic and contemporary articles, authors, and settings in an attempt to reflect all the armed services. Either because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or interest in writing about leadership, we found that most of the writing came from or was published by the Army. Our focus is leadership and our choices reflect articles that are relevant beyond a single military service. We wanted to include articles that will be attractive to students and practitioners as well as scholars. Fewer of our selections come from outside the military journals, which makes us wonder about who will independently examine military leadership perspectives in the future.

We added a third editor to begin the transition to a new generation. Eric Rosenbach joins us to provide a contemporary perspective. His political science background and experience in the military and government yielded a new network for us that links writings about the military to the issues of today. His experience of living and working abroad increases our range of international approaches so we can look at military leadership with more breadth.

There are four parts to this edition: leadership perspectives and context; character as the heart of leadership; general officers' leadership challenges and opportunities; and the question of the future of leadership. Because of increasing scrutiny of the performance of our senior military leaders over the past several years, we do concentrate a bit on flag officers. Some may question the emphasis, but clearly the leadership lessons apply to everyone. In many respects, it is the same attention that has been given to corporate and organizational executives in recent times. No matter where the successes and failures occur, the people at the top are, and ultimately should be, held accountable.

This book is designed to stimulate an intellectual, as well as practical, understanding of leadership development. Traditional leadership studies explore the various theories and research findings. Our companion text, *Contemporary Issues in Leadership*, provides theoretical perspectives as well as current thinking from business and politics. This volume presents a specific military perspective with the purpose of identifying factors and issues that define the domain of military leadership. We provide selected articles and essays we believe will help our readers understand and appreciate the complexities of leadership in today's world.

In the quest to find the best possible material, we discovered two books: one written in 1918 and the other written in 1936. We enjoyed reading about leadership and leadership development in earlier times because it gave us context as we explored the current literature. You will not be surprised that not much is really "new." Much of what people describe as the characteristics and behaviors for effective military leadership has not changed. What is different is our understanding of transactional and transformational leadership. Thus, this edition gives us the opportunity to structure leader effectiveness in terms of transformational leadership theory.

We trust that you will discover a logic and order to the book. At the same time, we recognize that readers may want to select articles without a specific rationale or context. Whatever the format may be, we propose this book to those who continue their leadership development and those who are responsible for training the military leaders of the future.

In Part One, we explore the perspectives and context of leadership as seen by leaders and by careful observers. Leaders and scholars give perspectives on what they believe leadership is or should be. The military has always provided a forum for the study of leadership because the concept is critical to individual and organizational success. Since the consequences of leadership failure

are severe, understanding the historical perspectives as well as a context for today's environment are critical to personal leadership development.

Part Two examines character associated with effective leadership. Candor, persuasion, loyalty, language and values, presence, and influence are addressed as essential character traits for the transformational (note that you have a choice: you may be “transformational” or “transforming”) leader. All of these appear to be common traits of successful leaders. How they are developed and nurtured becomes the issue for leadership development.

In Part Three, we address the leadership opportunities and challenges our senior leaders face. A novel perspective is presented from 1936 that is, in part, humorous but generally a template for the leadership to which many aspire. Research about women and their success in achieving senior leadership positions provides a contemporary view of challenges and opportunities. How commanders can be held accountable to multiple, sometimes contradictory expectations is highlighted with the caveat that many of the short-term criticisms were later proved to be incorrect. The conflicts over meeting political and strategic expectations are brought to the forefront for the reader to consider.

Part Four inquires about the future of leadership. The substance and process of leadership development are discussed with the idea that what we teach will be different for the future. Two international perspectives clarify the issues important to training military leaders of tomorrow. A process for developing transformational leadership skills in emerging leaders provides one model for how we must think about leadership development in the future.

The clash between personal and organizational values is a paradox of leadership that often leads to disappointment and loss for both the individual and the unit. Leaders identify and give meaning to core values, building ownership with the followers to embrace and live those values. Ultimately, this is the basis upon which we deal with paradoxes and hard choices as well as our day-to-day actions.

Both individual and organizational values influence a leader's style. Introspection, self-awareness, and an understanding of the consequences of our actions are necessary for a leader to choose the most appropriate style. Finally, character, the individual value important to our effectiveness as both leaders and followers, turns out to be not only our own responsibility but also our responsibility to each other.

We continue to be most grateful to colleagues and friends in the armed services who have encouraged us over the years. Their feedback on our work