

**Adaptability: Components of the Adaptive  
Competency for U.S. Army Direct and  
Organizational Level Leaders**

**A Monograph  
by  
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U.S. Army**



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## **ABSTRACT**

**ADAPTABILITY: COMPONENTS OF THE ADAPTIVE COMPETENCY FOR U.S. ARMY DIRECT AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL LEADERS** by Major Joseph L. Wyszynski, U.S. Army, 37 pages.

U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders faced challenges in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, which combined to create an environment permeated by ambiguity and replete with uncertainty. Although it may be impossible to predict future operational environments, it is likely that adversaries will continue to apply asymmetric warfare against the U.S. to attenuate her superiority in conventional warfare. The purpose of this monograph is to determine whether U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders are equipped with the competency to adapt successfully in asymmetric environments.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Challenge is developing leaders who can get the most out of the people they lead.

Gen Peter Schoomaker, CSA<sup>1</sup>

Recent military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have included most of the U.S. Army's officer corps. As major combat operations subsided in both campaigns, these officers confronted an increasingly complex environment, with adversaries striking in unexpected ways to leverage their strengths against U.S. Army vulnerabilities. Tactical leaders had to come to grips with concurrent and competing counter-insurgency and nation-building tasks. Adding to the challenge, these leaders found themselves operating alongside allies with unfamiliar faces, languages, and cultures. These challenges required leaders with the capacity to think, decide, and act in an environment permeated by ambiguity and uncertainty; and, most importantly, the challenges called for leaders with the capacity to adapt to this operational environment.

Although it may be impossible to predict future operational environments, it is very likely adversaries will continue to apply asymmetric warfare against the U.S. to attenuate her superiority in conventional warfare.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, it is not only appropriate but also necessary to ask whether U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders are equipped with the competency to adapt successfully in asymmetric environments. The purpose of this monograph is to answer this question.

Some have adopted the term "adaptive leadership," but the term is not clearly defined in U.S. Army doctrine. Army Field Manual 7.1, *Battle Focused Training*, maintains the ultimate goal of its leadership program is to develop "leaders who are self-aware, adaptive, competent and confident . . . Adaptive leaders have the ability to recognize change in their operating

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<sup>1</sup> Mitch Meador, "Terror War Like Cancer," *Lawton Constitution*, 3 August 2004, A1.

<sup>2</sup> Melissa Applegate, *Preparing for Asymmetry: As Seen Through the Lens of Joint Vision 2020* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, September 2001), 2. Available from <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/display.cfm/hurl/PubID=221>, Internet, Accessed on 4 September, 2004.

environment, identify those changes, and learn how to adapt to succeed in their new environment.”<sup>3</sup>

Jon Fallensen, a noted behavioral scientist, who works closely with the Center for Army Leadership at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, suggests people naturally adapt to new situations and conditions and, therefore, it is reasonable to expect military leaders likewise will adapt to their operational environment.<sup>4</sup> Webster’s dictionary defines *adaptive* as “capable of, suitable for, or tending toward adaptation,” that is, behavioral change of an individual or group in adjustment to new or modified cultural surroundings. In other words, adaptive behavior is the adjustment by which an individual improves his or her condition in relationship to the environment.

Clearly, the enemy is a pivotal factor in the military leader’s operational environment and, hence, it follows the enemy is also a primary catalyst that compels military leaders to adapt. Just as clearly, U.S. Army doctrine and history advise it is not enough to react to one’s adversary; it is much more desirable to anticipate the actions one’s adversary will take, and set the conditions necessary to turn those actions into outcomes that achieve one’s desired end state. Moreover, the activities such anticipation may trigger must be accomplished before one’s adversary can affect them. Consequently, any operational definition of *adaptive leadership* must also include the friendly-foe “anticipate-act-react-counteract” dynamics.

For the purpose of this research, the following definition for adaptive leadership will be used: “the capacity to recognize changing patterns in the operational environment and to take proactive steps to maintain the initiative and dictate the terms of the operation.”

The research methodology and, hence, the general outline of this paper, follows four steps. First, any study of leadership or leader competency must begin with an examination of existing doctrine. Therefore, the next chapter assesses whether or not current U.S. Army leadership doctrine accounts for the leadership challenges posed by asymmetric operational

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<sup>3</sup> Headquarters Department of the Army, Field Manual 7-1, *Battle Focused Training* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 2003), A-4.

<sup>4</sup> Jon Falleson, E-mail correspondence with author, 16 November 2004, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

environments, and whether or not this doctrine codifies the competencies direct and organizational level leaders must possess to adapt and lead successfully in these environments. It is already known that the Army has not defined adaptive leadership well. How well has she determined the competencies necessary for her direct and organizational level leaders to adapt effectively in the contemporary operational environment? Since doctrine is forever evolving, this first step also includes a review of ongoing Army initiatives to update the current leadership doctrine.

The second step explores combat in asymmetric environments. This step identifies the key combat dynamics in an asymmetric environment that affect U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders. This step produces the initial set of components of the adaptive competency.

The third step examines perspectives about adaptive leadership from direct and organizational level leaders who participated in both Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. This research step includes interviews with veterans of these two campaigns from the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The findings are correlated to the initial set of components of the adaptive competency from step two to produce a final set of components of the adaptive competency for U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders.

The fourth and last step determines whether fault-lines exist between current U.S. Army leadership doctrine and the components of the adaptive competency that step three determined U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders required to adapt and lead successfully in asymmetric environments. This last step also identifies areas requiring additional research and recommends changes to U.S. Army leadership doctrine and to the leader development and education programs for direct and organizational level leaders. The intent is to provide suggestions that will enhance U.S. Army developmental programs for producing direct and organizational leaders with the competencies to adapt and lead successfully in asymmetric operational environments. While these suggestions are appropriate for inclusion in emerging

leadership doctrine, they are also appropriate for use by units for improving their leader development and training programs in the meantime.

## DOCTRINE AND GUIDANCE

The U.S. Army views herself as “Doctrine-Based.”<sup>5</sup> It is therefore fitting to begin a study of leadership or leader competency with an examination of her leadership doctrine.

Army doctrine connects theory, history, experimentation and practice, capturing a broad body of knowledge and experience.<sup>6</sup> Doctrine not only provides an authoritative statement about how military forces do business, but also presents common language and terms with which to describe that business. In this regard, former Army Chief of Staff, Eric Shinseki, wrote that doctrine could provide a “professional intellectual framework for how we operate.”<sup>7</sup> Army doctrine is not meant, however, to be a textbook, with draconian steps to be employed in a linear or systematic fashion. Nor can doctrine predict precisely the exact details of each asymmetric engagement. However, doctrine can forecast the required traits and necessary body of knowledge necessary to cope with a muddled asymmetric operational environment.<sup>8</sup> Military historian and theorist J. F. C. Fuller posited “adapting action to circumstance” is the proper role for military doctrine.<sup>9</sup> The current Army Chief of Staff asserts doctrine must “Furnish the intellectual tools with which to diagnose unexpected requirements and a menu of practical options founded in experience from which leaders can create their own solutions quickly and effectively.”<sup>10</sup> Fostering curiosity and creativity, doctrine hence serves more as a guide than a roadmap.

In 1999, then Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki, as part of the Army transformation process, chartered the Army Training and Leadership Development Panel

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<sup>5</sup> Les Brownlee and Peter J. Schoomaker, “Serving a Nation at War: A Campaign Quality Army with Joint and Expeditionary Capabilities,” *Parameters* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 20; and Clinton J. Ancker and Michael D. Burke, “Doctrine for Asymmetric Warfare,” *Military Review* (July/August 2003): 18-25.

<sup>7</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 3.0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001): forward.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>9</sup> Ancker and Burke, 18.

<sup>10</sup> Brownlee and Schoomaker, 20.

(ATLDP) to look specifically at training and Army leader development.<sup>11</sup> The panel not only conducted an extensive study of the Army's doctrine and leadership development practices, but also surveyed soldiers and their families and worked to determine characteristics and skills of future Army leaders. The panel's report on officer development, delivered in May of 2001, has had far reaching impact and has been instrumental in shaping perceptions of institutional and unit training.<sup>12</sup> The report's findings and recommendations also have influenced current and emerging Army leadership doctrine.

The panel's resulting findings provided compelling evidence for the Army to link training and leader development. It also concluded the leader development system is in need of overhaul, suggested several key definitions, and emphasized the critical need to understand, articulate, and focus upon leader competencies. In sum, the panel concluded the leader development system needed retooling to yield the desired leader at the far end.

The panel's recommendations on the leader development system are aimed at preparing future Army leaders for full spectrum operations. A stated goal of the recommendations is to provide the Army with competent, confident, and motivated leaders. The panel calls for an institutional mechanism that provides assessment, evaluation, and feedback on its training and leader development system. Moreover, the panel identified the requirement to strengthen the linkage and balance the integration among the institutional, operational, and self-development domains of Army leader development. The panel's report envisioned improvements in mentoring and lifelong learning, as well as the evolution of the institutional domain with the increased role of advanced distributed learning. The panel's observations become increasingly salient considering the Army's planned transformation to Units of Action manned for a thirty-six month

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<sup>11</sup> Headquarters Department of the Army, The Army Training and Leader Development Panel (ATLDP) Officer Study Report to the Army, Available from <http://www.army.mil/atld>, 2001: OS-1, Internet, Accessed on 7 September 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Leonard Wong, Stephen Gerras, William Kidd, Robert Pricone, and Richard Swengros, *Strategic Leader Competencies* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, September 2003), 6..

unit lifecycle; commanders will bear increased responsibility in the development of their direct and organizational level leaders.

The panel found that Army training doctrine is fundamentally sound, but recommended it be adapted to reflect the operational environment and the tools required to train in that environment.<sup>13</sup> One significant adaptation offered is the definition and focus needed on enduring competencies. The report defined competency as an “underlying characteristic related to effective or superior performance.”<sup>14</sup> The utility of competencies is that they provide a common lexicon to confer about leader and unit performance, leader selection, development, and advancement. The common language not only facilitates discussion but also can foster and improve feedback. The strength of competencies, the panel reports, is that they provide a roadmap enabling leaders to know what they have to accomplish. Army leaders armed with competencies matched to the operating environment become aware of the need to develop new competencies in rapidly changing environments; know how to develop new competencies; and can transfer that learning within and beyond their own organization.

The panel found that, due to the ambiguous nature of future operational environments, focus should be directed upon developing Army leader’s self awareness and adaptability. These enduring competencies are so important, the panel describes them as “metacompetencies.”<sup>15</sup> Self-awareness includes the ability to assess strengths and weaknesses in the operational environment and the knowledge of how to leverage the strengths and correct the weaknesses. Closely connected is the metacompetency of adaptability. The panel defines adaptability as the ability to recognize changes in the environment, assess against the environment to determine what is new and what to learn to be effective, and the learning process that follows.<sup>16</sup> Possessing these

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<sup>13</sup> ATLDP, Phase 1, OS-2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., OS-3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., OS-3.

competencies enables leaders to recognize and accept change and then modify behavior within the operating environment.

The panel called upon the Army to adopt a competency based leadership framework. It recommended the Army use three approaches to develop further the competencies required of her leaders. The first is a values-based approach. The panel identifies values as the heart and soul of the Soldier's profession; values should provide the foundation upon which all other leader competencies are based. The second approach the panel advocated is a research-based method. Examining the performance of successful leaders, then analyzing their behavior, validating its consistency with other achievers, and deriving skills, knowledge, and attributes constitutes the research-based method the panel recommended to deduce leader attributes of current and past successful leaders. The third recommended approach is strategy-based. This approach examines the Army's azimuth and enables the Army, as an institution, and its leaders to prepare for future operational environments. This method "enables lifelong learning through the enduring competencies of self awareness and adaptability for ambiguous future environments."<sup>17</sup> The panel concluded that in the past the Army relied heavily on the values- and research-based approaches, but the Army must use all three approaches to develop its leaders to their fullest potential. The report is as compelling as it is practical. Its depth provides detailed evidence, and its breadth urges change. However, it has yet to be made manifest via a revision to the U.S. Army capstone leadership manual, Field Manual (FM) 22-100.

The momentum for change initiated by General Shinseki and the ATLDP has continued under the auspices of the current Army Chief of Staff. To be sure, General Peter J. Schoomaker accepted the reigns as Army Chief of Staff during turbulent and trying times. The nation was at war, fighting on fronts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and conducting stability and support operations in numerous locations. He also inherited the mission to transform the Army to be more deployable and agile, without decreasing current capabilities. "Relevant and Ready" became the slogan to

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

capture the need for change. General Schoomaker promulgated several documents to provide strategic guidance and an azimuth to guide his complimentary but often competing mandates. Among these strategic documents are The Army Campaign Plan (ACP) and the 2004 Army Transformation Roadmap. Both documents add important details to the Army Chief of Staff's intent.

The ACP describes how the Army plans to provide essential forces and resources to combatant commanders in support of national security and defense strategies. Its focus is upon transforming the current force to "create a Joint and Expeditionary Army now."<sup>18</sup> The ACP endeavors to transform the force over a time horizon of ten years. It provides a framework to understand how the Army aims to develop a more relevant and ready Army, that is a more modular and capable force, while concurrently providing soldiers and their families a more stable and predictable lifestyle. Fundamental to this document is the recognition that the nation is involved in a long and different war.<sup>19</sup> The plan clarifies measures the Army is taking to restructure its forces and policies while fighting current threats and transforming to defeat emerging ones.

Among the ACP's purposes is to inform doctrine and, hence, this strategic document is germane to this study. Three elements of the ACP are particularly important since they provide additional clarity regarding the competencies required of future Army leaders. First, is the plan's identification of the Army's core competencies. Second, is its description of the reorganization of combat and institutional units to meet current and projected threats. Third, is its declaration of the Soldier as the centerpiece of Army transformation.

The ACP promulgates two Army core competencies: train and equip soldiers and grow leaders; and, provide relevant and ready land power capability to the combatant commanders as

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<sup>18</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Campaign Plan Presentation Slide 8, Available from [www.army.mil/thewayahead/acp.html](http://www.army.mil/thewayahead/acp.html), Internet, Accessed on 2 November, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Speaker Notes, Slide 2.

part of the Joint Team.”<sup>20</sup> The two Army core competencies highlight the need for forces relevant to the challenges posed in the contemporary operational environment (COE) and ready to achieve operational and strategic objectives in the COE. They also make it clear forces will be neither relevant nor ready if leaders are unable to adapt to the asymmetries in their environment.

The second element of the ACP important to this study is the reorganization of combat and institutional units to meet current and projected threats. The Army will build an increased number of modular, standardized units to increase its flexibility and to better meet the needs of combatant commanders. No longer will Divisions be the centerpieces of Army formations, rather Brigade Combat Teams will become the building blocks in a transformed Army. These smaller self-contained “Units of Action” will be powerful and able to operate across the full spectrum of military operations, including asymmetric operational environments. They will be permanently task organized and require minimal augmentation. Developing direct and organizational level leaders with the competencies to optimize the potential of this future modular force will be vital.

The centerpiece of Army transformation, the Soldier, is the third element of the ACP important to this study. The Army will alter assignment policies to minimize personnel turbulence, and the Soldier’s tour will be synchronized with the unit’s 36-month operational lifecycle. The goal is to increase unit readiness levels, improve unit cohesion and soldiers’ depth and experience, and improve family stability and predictability. Myriad programs will require overhaul to make the objectives of this transformed Army manifest. As examples, schools and promotions will be more difficult to de-conflict, and institutional leader education and developmental opportunities will become increasingly rare during a unit’s lifecycle. Clearly, a higher premium than ever before will be placed on the competence of direct and organizational level leaders to inspire, lead, and care for their Soldiers.

The ACP hints at competencies required for its direct and organizational level leaders. The information age will demand new skills, an inherent flexibility, and, since quantity is less

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Slide 7.

important than quality, versatility. Diversity and adaptability will be integral for transformation as Schoomaker seeks to develop leaders who can find “Opportunities within chaos.”<sup>21</sup> To find and exploit these opportunities, the Army will need every Soldier to be a sensor and a leader. Army leaders must be responsible for what happens in their presence. They must value learning as much as they strive to adapt and maintain the initiative. Teamwork will become increasingly important, as will efforts to find solutions rather than fixing blame. Army leaders will need the skills to “create situations for an adversary, rather than reacting to them.”<sup>22</sup>

General Schoomaker’s plan to develop adaptive leaders emphasizes training for certainty and education to deal with uncertainty. One certainty for leaders and Soldiers alike is that they will deploy, most likely into combat. Since the battlefield is becoming less linear, with front and rear lines blurring, all soldiers must be “warriors first, and specialists second.”<sup>23</sup> The ACP should inform leader development doctrine in a major way. Direct and organizational level leaders will now have many of their initial developmental experiences in Units of Action. Additionally, unit commanders will inherit an increased burden for leader development. They will need to rely more heavily upon operational or unit level training since institutional learning experiences will become spaced further apart and possibly shorter in duration.

As previously stated, the 2004 Army Transformation Report is also important to this study. The Report provides an update to the Secretary of Defense on the Army’s transformation status. Whereas the ACP provided broad guidance, this Report reiterates the Army Chief of Staff’s intent and provides increased resolution on the Army’s leader development plan, outlining

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<sup>21</sup> Leonard Wong, “Developing Adaptive Leaders: The Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom” [quote by General Peter J. Schoomaker] (Monograph, Carlisle Barracks, PA, Strategic Studies Institute, July 2004), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Brownlee and Schoomaker, 12.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

the details of ongoing leader development initiatives and highlighting the human dimension of leadership as the crucial enabler for the realization of future force capabilities.<sup>24</sup>

The Army defines leadership as “influencing people by providing purpose, direction and motivation-while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization.”<sup>25</sup> The Report reiterates this definition, which does not include “adaptability,” and asserts the “Be-Know-Do” framework remains relevant in achieving future force capability.<sup>26</sup> Invoking the Army’s core competencies, it underscores the importance of leader development by declaring, “Leader development is the life blood of the profession.”<sup>27</sup> Further, it demonstrates the linkage between the Army’s leader development initiatives and the broader Department of Defense transformation, pointing out the Army supports joint transformation by developing innovative and adaptive leaders who are comfortable operating as part of the joint force, or leading a joint force in the joint interagency and multinational environment while conducting full-spectrum operations.<sup>28</sup>

The Report also reveals the fact that much more needs to be done to leverage the Army’s human and intellectual capital. It identifies the need to retool leader development and training in a manner that focuses “on gaining and sustaining high levels of experience in technical and cognitive” realms.<sup>29</sup> Importantly, it calls for a gradual transformation from the three pillars of Army leader development, institutional, operational, and self-development to a more balanced, integrated, and progressive model. The shift in Army leader development will make use of globally distributed learning, provide twenty-four hour reach back capability, and make

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<sup>24</sup> Les Brownlee and Peter J. Schoomaker, 2004 *Army Transformation Roadmap*, version 5.0 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2004), 5-1.

<sup>25</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1990), 2.

<sup>26</sup> Brownlee and Schoomaker, 2004 *Army Transformation Roadmap*, 5-2. The Army’s doctrinal definition of leadership, found both in this document and FM 22-100, *Army Leadership* is: “influencing people by providing purpose direction and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization.”

<sup>27</sup> Brownlee and Schoomaker, 2004 *Army Transformation Roadmap*, 5-1.

<sup>28</sup> Brownlee and Schoomaker, 2004 *Army Transformation Roadmap*, 5-2.

<sup>29</sup> Brownlee and Schoomaker, 2004 *Army Transformation Roadmap*, 5-2.

on-demand feedback available so competencies can be developed earlier in a leader's career. The product of this transformed leader development plan will be leaders who are multi-functional, capable of full-spectrum operations in a joint multi-national environment, comfortable with ambiguity, information systems literate, system of systems thinkers, and capable of intuitive assessments of situations for rapid conceptualization of friendly courses of action.

This seemingly all encompassing job description could generate an exhaustive list of competencies for adaptive leaders to master. Yet, if the reader is looking for what the Army requires of its adaptive leaders, the 2004 Army Transformation Report will leave him searching. Although the Report emphasizes leadership is composed of enduring principles, it provides little resolution as to what the principles are. The Report's significance notwithstanding, it is wanting as pertains to codifying the competencies required by direct and organizational leaders to adapt and lead successfully in the asymmetric operational environments.

A look at the Army's doctrinal field manuals should provide additional insight into the competencies the Army requires of her direct and organizational level leaders. Army doctrine clearly establishes the importance of leadership and the criticality of having competent leaders. However, the roar for adaptive leaders in the ACP and 2004 Army Transformation Report is at best an occasional shout in the chorus of current Army doctrinal manuals.

Published in June of 2001, FM 3.0, *Operations*, represents the Army's keystone doctrine for full-spectrum operations. The manual advocates the primacy of war fighting, but makes it clear Army forces must dominate any situation in the military operations spectrum.<sup>30</sup> As former Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, writes in the introduction, FM 3.0 "provides the professional intellectual framework for how we operate."<sup>31</sup> Leadership is identified as the "most dynamic element of combat power," since leadership focuses the other elements of combat power. The manual calls upon every leader to be competent in the profession of arms, asserting

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<sup>30</sup> Headquarters Department of the Army, Field Manual 3.0, vii.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., foreword.

competence requires proficiency in four sets of skills: interpersonal, conceptual, technical, and tactical. While this is not a specific reference to competencies, it certainly emphasizes the importance of leadership to battlefield success.

The theme regarding the importance of leadership to battlefield success is also extant in FM 7.0, *Training the Force*. Published in October 2002, this keystone training manual identifies leader training and development as integral parts of unit readiness. It points to leader development as a deliberate, continuous, sequential and progressive process grounded in Army values--a lifelong synthesis of the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained through institutional training and education, organizational training, operational experience and self-development.

The theme reaches its apex in FM 7.1, *Battle Focused Training*, as it declares, “Training soldiers and developing leaders is the commander’s number one priority.”<sup>32</sup> Particularly useful is Appendix A, which attempts to provide an integrated treatment of leader training and leader development. The Appendix defines competency as “the knowledge, skills and abilities that impact leader behavior and performance.”<sup>33</sup> It asserts these characteristics can dictate performance success. Even if they may not be directly observable, they emerge through actions and behavior. The foundations of broad based leader competencies enable leaders to guide their organizations even in ambiguous operating environments. The Appendix invokes the ATLDP’s metacompetencies by calling for self aware and adaptive leaders, “Adaptive leaders recognize change in their operating environment, identify those changes, and learn how to adapt to succeed in the new environment.”<sup>34</sup> Still, FM 7.1 does not identify the components of the adaptive competency.

FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*, published in August 1999, the Army’s capstone leadership doctrine, does not proffer a leadership competency model. Although it addresses competence as a level of obtained proficiency, no mention of competencies can be found between its covers.

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<sup>32</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 7.1, 1-23.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., A-3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., A-4.

Instead, the manual introduces a leadership framework comprised of thirty-nine components; outlining what Army officers must “Be, Know and Do.” The framework is further divided into “Be” dimensions, consisting of seven values and three attributes; the “Know” dimension containing four skills; and the “Do” dimension, which consists of twelve actions.

Recently, the Army commissioned a Future Leadership Requirements Study to explore how well the current Army leadership framework supports requirements for leadership in the future. The authors found FM 22-100 in need of revision.<sup>35</sup> Some of the shortcomings they identified include redundancy in the skills and attributes areas, a combining of traits, processes and functions, and unclear distinctions amongst the action components.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, since the manual pre-dates FM 3-0, FM 7-0, and FM 7-1, it does not provide the overarching context for the leadership constructs in these manuals.

FM 6-22 soon will replace FM 22-100 as the Army’s capstone leadership manual. It is expected to adopt competencies and competency-based leadership. Since the Future Leadership Requirements Study has been one of the primary catalysts for FM 6-22 conceptual development, the manual could adopt the Study’s model, consisting of eight leadership competencies, fifty-five components, and hundreds of sample actions. Whichever competency model FM 6-22 adopts, it must inform the development of Army leaders with competencies that transcend time, variable situations, and particular units. FM 6-22 should be a useful guide for preparing direct and organizational level leaders to adapt and lead successfully in asymmetric environments. The manual should elevate “adaptability” to its rightful prominence among the competencies, define adaptive leadership, and codify its essential components.

In the past, Army doctrine accounted for a strategic setting characterized by a sole adversary with armed forces symmetric to her own. Conversely, the evolving strategic setting features myriad adversaries, all of whom are likely to apply asymmetric warfare against the U.S.

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<sup>35</sup> US Army Future Requirements Study, i.

<sup>36</sup> Center for Army Leadership, “Leadership Competency Concept Paper” (Fort Leavenworth, KS: November 2004): 4.

to attenuate her superiority in conventional warfare--adversaries who reject predictable operating patterns.<sup>37</sup> As the operational environment evolves, it is essential that a doctrine-based army develop doctrine relevant to future operating environments. Doctrine should identify what competencies the Army has judged important for her direct and organizational level leaders to lead effectively in an asymmetric operating environment; and, it should codify the competencies direct and organizational level leaders need to adapt successfully in this environment.

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<sup>37</sup> Colin S. Gray, "Thinking Asymmetrically in Times of Terror," *Parameters* (Spring 2002): 2.

## THE ASYMMETRIC ENVIRONMENT

The nature of future operational environments is likely to be characterized by “uncertainty and unpredictability.”<sup>38</sup> As the Army adopts an expeditionary stance, the uncertainty that direct and organizational level leaders experience surely will not diminish. Army leaders will participate in operations as part of temporary commands, or Joint Task Forces, and work with Joint, Inter-Agency, and Multi-National partners. Leaders may face fleeting and indistinct enemy who garners support from a non-military support structure.<sup>39</sup> They may face several adversaries, who are difficult to identify. These adversaries may operate in complex terrain such as mountains, jungles and urban areas, in small-decentralized groups, and use low technology in weaponry in unexpected ways.<sup>40</sup> These factors combine to create maximum uncertainty for direct and organizational level leaders.

As old as warfare itself, the concept of asymmetric warfare has received renewed attention as a result of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). Disparity between belligerents seeking to gain a comparative advantage has been around for a very long time. From the biblical tale of David and Goliath, to the writings of Sun Tzu, to the “Indirect Approach” advocated by military theorist B.H. Liddell Hart, adversaries have always sought to avoid their enemies strengths and find their foes’ weakness.<sup>41</sup> As the United States continues to outpace potential adversaries in developing military capabilities, the disparity in military arsenals between the United States and its potential adversaries will increase. This growing capability gap could force adversaries towards asymmetric approaches.<sup>42</sup> Although it may be impossible to predict future operating environments, it is likely adversaries will

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<sup>38</sup> D. Robert Worley, “Asymmetry and Adaptive Command,” *Military Review* (July-August 2001): 39.

<sup>39</sup> Montgomery C. Meigs, “Unorthodox Thoughts About Asymmetric Warfare,” *Parameters* (Summer 2003): 8.

<sup>40</sup> Worley, 39; and Grey.

<sup>41</sup> J.G. Eaton, “The Beauty of Asymmetry: An examination of the context and Practice of Asymmetric and Unconventional Warfare from a Western/Centrist Perspective,” *Defense Studies* 2, no.1 (Spring 2002): 51.

<sup>42</sup> Applegate, 9.

continue to apply asymmetric warfare against the U.S. to attenuate her superiority in conventional warfare.

The 1995 National Military Strategy marks the first explicit mention of Asymmetric warfare.<sup>43</sup> The document defined asymmetric engagements between dissimilar forces, and used the concept only in a limited scope. In 1997, The Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review increased the focus upon asymmetric warfare and led to a congressional panel commissioned group, The National Defense Panel, which produced a more detailed assessment. If U.S. adversaries would learn from Iraq's experience during the first Gulf War, the Panel postulated, they would "look for ways to match their strength against our weakness."<sup>44</sup> Specific mention was given to dangers arising from weapons of mass destruction, attacks on intelligence and command and control systems, terrorism, as well as mines and other unconventional approaches.

The Joint Staff and intelligence community produced a series of conceptual documents, including *Asymmetric Approaches to Warfare*, *Joint Vision 2010*, and *Joint Vision 2020* seeking to provide a conceptual framework for asymmetric warfare.<sup>45</sup> *Joint Vision 2020* represents a visualization of how U.S. military forces can win future wars and purports asymmetric approaches could be among the "most serious of threats."<sup>46</sup>

Applying increased rigor to address the nature and dynamics of asymmetric warfare, Steven Metz and Douglas V. Johnson of the Strategic Studies Institute have proffered a definition and conceptual model to apply to asymmetric warfare. They define strategic asymmetry as follows:

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<sup>43</sup> Steven Metz and Douglas V. Johnson II, *Asymmetry and U.S. Military Strategy: Definition, Background, and Strategic Concepts* (Carlisle Barracks: PA: Strategic Studies Institute, January 2001), 2. Available from <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/display.cfm/hurl/PubID=223>, Internet, Accessed on 4 September, 2004. See also J. G. Eaton, 51.

<sup>44</sup> National Defense Panel, *Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21st Century* (Arlington VA: Government Printing Office, December 1997), 11.

<sup>45</sup> Metz and Johnson, 3.

<sup>46</sup> The Joint Staff, *Joint Vision 2020* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), 5.

“Asymmetry is acting, organizing, and thinking differently than opponents in order to maximize one’s own advantages, exploit an opponent’s weaknesses, attain the initiative, and gain greater freedom of action. It can be political-strategic, military strategic, operational or a combination of these. It can entail different methods, technologies, values, organizations, time perspectives, or some combination of these. It can be short-term or long-term. It can be deliberate or pursued in conjunction with symmetric approaches. It can have both psychological and physical dimensions.”

Their conceptual model includes both positive and negative dimensions of asymmetry. Positive asymmetry makes use of differences to gain an advantage, while negative asymmetry views the differences as a threat. Their model offers six forms of asymmetry as relevant to national security and warfare: methods, technology, will, morale, organization and time. By analyzing OEF and OIF via these forms of asymmetry, key combat dynamics affecting U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders emerge, which can be used to determine potential components of the adaptive competency.

An asymmetry of method occurs when adversaries use different operational concepts or tactical doctrines. Past adversaries, such as the North Vietnamese, have used Mao’s model to engage the U.S. and her allies in protracted guerrilla wars. Current and future adversaries may use concepts or tactics that the U.S. may find difficult to respond to in kind, or in a discriminate or proportional manner.<sup>47</sup> Use of human shields, suicide bombers, and targeting of lines of communications (LOCs) are tactics that could prove particularly vexing to direct and organizational level leaders. As the adversary targets U.S. forces and allies in unanticipated ways, leaders will need to recognize that there are no safe rear areas and be vigilant for attack from 360 degrees. Leaders should prioritize force protection, conceptualize responses that discriminate and pay attention to the proportionality of response. Many of these factors were extant in OEF and OIF as indicated by an adversary who disguised himself as a refueler to

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<sup>47</sup> Grey, 2.

infiltrate a major U.S. operating base and detonate an improvised explosive device; an adversary who repeatedly used human shields to protect himself and infrastructure critical to his regime; an adversary who beheaded hostages to prosecute his political, psychological, and military campaign. Such asymmetry of method requires direct and organizational level leaders to maintain situational awareness like never before; to understand the capabilities of their units as well as the capabilities of their adversary better than ever; to have the mental agility to anticipate asymmetric methods the adversary could employ; and, to conceptualize ways to impose their will on this agile, thinking, and resilient foe. In such a dynamic environment, direct and organizational level leaders will have to display confidence, self-control, composure, and a positive attitude. And, they must be more adaptive and resilient than their foe. While maintaining and enforcing high professional standards in the potential environment, they must be ready to accept reasonable setbacks and failures. Expanding their conceptual abilities will be as crucial to success as being able to identify and adjust to external factors that influence their organization and environment.

Asymmetries of technology feature differences in technological capabilities. Industrialized-advanced states typically utilize superior weapons systems against less advanced foes. U.S. forces already use technological asymmetries to its advantage. For example, technological developments enable direct and organizational level leaders to engage targets more precisely and at farther distances; and, leaders at all levels are able to share information quicker and more accurately than in the past. However, crafty adversaries find counters to asymmetries of technology over extended conflicts.<sup>48</sup> The Adversaries may target U.S. command and control nodes with the aim to cripple U.S. forces by striking a perceived “Achilles heel.”<sup>49</sup> For example, Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) and Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) ambushes targeting lightly armored vehicles or weak points on heavily armored vehicles in compartmentalized terrain

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<sup>48</sup> Metz and Johnson, 11.

<sup>49</sup> J. G. Eaton, 55.

is a common technique employed by adversaries in both Afghanistan and Iraq. To prevail against asymmetries of technology, direct and organizational level leaders will need to know their systems capabilities and vulnerabilities. They will need to be able to manage and comprehend information and take calculated risks to take advantage of fleeting opportunities. Technically perceptive direct and organizational level leaders will need to continually remain abreast of the technological advances. Sample actions could include analyzing and organizing information; expanding knowledge of technical and technological areas; and, maximizing the use of available technology to leverage the organization's capabilities. Always cognizant of the adversary, the adaptive leader must understand the adversaries' technological capabilities as well as his own.

Asymmetries of will are most visible at the strategic and operational levels of war; at the tactical level, this form of asymmetry becomes one of morale.<sup>50</sup> As the levels of war between the strategic, operational and tactical often blur, so too do these two asymmetries. In asymmetries of will, or morale, differences emerge as one antagonist views its vital interests or survival at stake, while the other is protecting less than vital interests. With greater will or morale, an adversary might be willing to accept more risks and costs or even employ methods that might be rejected otherwise. Adversaries may target the morale of U.S. troops attempt to disrupt U.S. led coalitions, and attack the support from the American public. Clearly, Taliban propaganda before Operation ANACONDA sought to diminish the morale of the U.S. infantryman; and in Iraq, attacks on the U.N. headquarters undoubtedly were intended to disrupt international support and diminish U.S. resolve. Direct and organizational leaders must be able to keep their soldiers focused on the mission. In so doing, caution must be employed to prevent the artificial overlaying of U.S. values and morals upon likely adversaries. U.S. Army leaders will need to demonstrate resolve and explain to their Soldiers not only the context of operations but also the importance of their effort. Sample actions to counter asymmetries of will or morale include commitment to Nation, Army, unit, communities and allies. Cultural awareness as well as

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<sup>50</sup> Metz and Johnson, 10-11.

conveying the significance of the task and purpose of their work also mitigates asymmetries of will or morale.

Asymmetry of organizations is another form of asymmetry found in asymmetric warfare. U.S. forces may not face adversaries organized in a similar hierarchical fashion. Non-state adversaries with loyalties to tribes, clans or movements may organize as networks, rather than structured formations, increasing the uncertainty associated with the unfamiliar. Identification of the enemy becomes problematic and structures become more flexible and less structured as individuals try to obscure their associations.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, in Afghanistan and after the completion of major combat operations in Iraq, U.S. forces faced unexpected and elusive adversaries with organizations structured in unfamiliar ways. Army leaders will need to ensure they do not imprint their organizational hierarchy onto the adversary. To emphasize asymmetric organizational advantages against adversaries, direct and organizational level leaders will need to build flexibility within their organizations. Combined arms teams will need to be formed and employed at the lowest levels. Engineers, infantrymen, intelligence specialists, translators, special operating forces, and interagency members will need to form teams that can combine their efforts in a synergistic fashion to impose the future upon the adversary. Such organizational flexibility will place a premium on tactical level leaders who make decisions with operational and strategic context in mind. It also mandates situational awareness, understanding the nature and capabilities of the enemy's organization, and mental agility. To exploit the symmetries of organization, leaders must be expert at building teams and processes. They must clearly express intent, and issue orders that focus upon that intent, versus the plan.

Finally, asymmetries of time or patience can be significant. Asymmetries occur in this form when one adversary enters a conflict for a short period while the other views the conflict as a protracted struggle. Congressional and public support for any use of force exclusive of vital

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<sup>51</sup> Meigs, 7.

national interest has a limited life span.<sup>52</sup> The U.S. eschews protracted conflict, yet asymmetric warfare is likely to extend conflict as adversaries labor to make decisive victory increasingly elusive. Direct and organizational level leaders must be patient. The quick solution may not yield decisive results. By accounting for the context of time and advocating patience within and beyond their organization, direct and organizational level leaders can counter asymmetries of time.

The foregoing suggests that, if adaptive leaders are to dictate the parameters for action, they must be equipped with five components of the adaptive competency:

1) They must possess situational awareness. They observe their environment, recognize changes and maintain vigilance for not only threats, but also opportunities.

2) Once recognizing the threats and opportunities extant in their operational environment, adaptive leaders must be intelligent risk takers. Balancing initiative and creativity, intelligent risk takers can find and exploit opportunity in the midst of uncertainty. By sorting through the unfamiliar and uncertain, intelligent risk takers act well before all the information becomes available; they see meaning in unfolding events and are ready to act accordingly.<sup>53</sup>

3) In the asymmetric operating environment, it becomes more critical than ever before for leaders to know themselves and to understand their adversary. Adaptive leaders do not imprint existing beliefs or bias on top of the adversary or culture.<sup>54</sup> They understand their adversaries methods, technical and technological capabilities, morale and organization as well as their own. They are culturally perceptive and, hence, understand the context of their adversary's actions. And, they are expert team builders, capable of restructuring their organization and work as part of a Joint, Inter-agency, and Multi-national team.

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<sup>52</sup> Metz and Johnson, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas J. Williams, "Strategic Leader Readiness and Competencies for Asymmetric Warfare," *Parameters* (Summer 2003): 26.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

4) Mental agility enables the adaptive leader to reduce some of the uncertainty associated with asymmetric warfare. Mentally agile leaders are able to filter through the fog, identify that which is important, and prioritize efforts to achieve a desired outcome. They look at problems from different perspectives and continually evaluate the relevance of information and question assumptions. They can make sense of chaos; they translate complex situations, providing meaningful explanations for those they lead.<sup>55</sup>

5) Finally, action amidst uncertainties and ambiguities that permeate asymmetric warfare requires strength of character.<sup>56</sup> The aim of asymmetric warfare is to increase the uncertainty in the mind of the adversary; adaptive leaders possess the strength of character to withstand uncertainties and ambiguities while accentuating their effects upon the adversary. Leaders possessing this component of the adaptive competency maintain high professional standards and accept reasonable setbacks and failures. They uphold the values of the nation and the Army, and they have the resolve to execute a mission to completion.

In sum, this study thus far has deduced five components of the adaptive competency. That is, adaptive leaders are: situationally aware, intelligent risk-takers, know themselves and their adversary, are mentally agile and possess strength of character. Next, these components of the adaptive competency will be correlated with the interviews conducted with veterans of the 505th Parachute Infantry regiment who participated in both OEF and OIF to produce a final set of components of the adaptive competency that U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders require to lead successfully in asymmetric environments.

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<sup>55</sup> Leonard Wong, Stephen Gerras, William Kidd, Robert Pricone, and Richard Swengros, *Strategic Leader Competencies* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, September 2003), 6. The authors identify mental agility as a competency for U.S. Army strategic leaders. Mental agility is increasingly important to direct and organizational level leaders as well.

<sup>56</sup> Williams, 24.

## CASE STUDY-505th PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT

The 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) is typical of many U.S. Army units. It is composed of soldiers and leaders who work together as a team to accomplish assigned missions. The unit is distinctive, however, in that it participated in both OEF and OIF in the early stages of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The 505th PIR faced varied conventional and unconventional forces in two distinct areas of operations, including Al Qaeda terrorists, warlord militias and Taliban military forces in Afghanistan, and the Republican Guard, Special Forces, paramilitary units and organized criminals in Iraq. These threats employed very different methods, at times in the same battle space, and presented diverse and dangerous challenges for the Soldiers and leaders of the third brigade, 82d Airborne Division.<sup>57</sup>

In a post-OEF interview, the brigade commander commented that his unit “conducted decentralized, non-contiguous operations against an enemy attempting to operate in an asymmetrical manner. Yet, despite the challenges of decentralization and asymmetry, the young soldiers and leaders of the task force always seemed to do the right thing.”<sup>58</sup> They were able to adapt quickly to situations while overcoming the challenges presented in the asymmetric operational environment. An analysis of 138 interviews conducted by the U.S. Army Infantry School in addition to this author’s personal interviews with five commanders in the 505th PIR, will yield findings pertaining to adaptive leadership competencies, which will be correlated to the set of competencies derived in the previous chapter to produce a synthesis of the direct and organizational leadership competencies necessary to adapt and lead successfully in symmetric environments.

In June 2002, the 505th PIR deployed to Afghanistan as part of OEF. Task organized with enablers, the brigade became Task Force Panther, and conducted a transfer of authority with

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<sup>57</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, 82d Airborne Division Memorandum, Narrative for Presidential Unit Citation, Fort Bragg, NC: 1.

<sup>58</sup> James Huggins, Col. as quoted by Arthur Durante in an interview of TF Panther Commander, 28 March 2003, as part of the U.S. Army Infantry School, Afghanistan Combat Lessons Learned Collection, Visit to 82d Airborne Division, TF Panther, Fort Bragg, NC, 25-28 March 2003.

the 187th Infantry Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division on 20 July 2002.<sup>59</sup> During the next six months, Task Force Panther conducted over forty-five combat operations involving ground and air assaults throughout eastern Afghanistan to kill or capture Al Qaeda and Taliban forces. The Task Force took into custody over sixty personnel, destroyed weapons caches at thirty-four objectives, and provided security at eleven firebases and two airfields before transferring authority to the first brigade of the 82d Airborne Division.<sup>60</sup>

Task Force Panther deployed again on 7 August 2003 to Iraq in support of OIF. Over the next seven months, the Task Force conducted over twenty-eight major combat operations and hundreds of combat patrols and raids in close coordination with special operations forces. All of these operations were conducted as part of a joint and inter-agency team, integrating all the combat functions within a complex asymmetric operational environment.

From the words of the direct and organizational level leaders in the 505th PIR emerge components of the adaptive leader competency. The diverse operational environments compelled them to become adaptive leaders. They quickly became situationally aware of their decentralized and ambiguous operational environment. They balanced hazard versus reward when opportunity presented itself, demonstrating intelligent risk-taking. They learned the capabilities of their unit as well as the capabilities of the enemy they faced, enemy who fought for every inch of ground. Ingenuous and innovative, these leaders demonstrated mental agility, finding novel solutions to unforeseen challenges. They demonstrated resolve in the face of adversity, experienced heart-wrenching agony over the loss of comrades, and displayed the strength of character to continue their mission. Much can be learned about the components of adaptability from the veterans of the 505th PIR.

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<sup>59</sup> U.S. Army, 505th PIR, Memorandum For Record, 505th Historical Narrative for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, 16 January, 2002, Fort Bragg, NC.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Army, 505th PIR, Power Point Presentation, TF Panther Operations, dated 30 December 2002, Fort Bragg, NC.

Adaptable leaders are cognizant of the many variables, constraints, and limitations that confront them. In OIF, direct and organizational level leaders became situationally aware of the cultural complexities and heterogeneous attitudes amongst the Iraqi populace. One commander reported, “We always attempted to wave and gauge the response, if no one in the neighborhood waved back, we would characterize the area as not-friendly.”<sup>61</sup> New technologies enabled company commanders and platoon leaders to attain a better mental picture of their location, subordinates, terrain and objectives. Use of improved command and control systems allowed for a positive asymmetry of technology to increase these leaders understanding of the battle space. “I used it for situational awareness and my [anti-tank platoon] used it for land navigation.”<sup>62</sup> One lesson, writ large in a company after action report, pointed to the need to keep aware of the environment while conducting outer ring security during raids and searches. “Remain flexible and remember . . .Static Kills!”<sup>63</sup> By directing the isolation force to conduct dismounted patrolling, rather than stationary positioning, a leader could increase his unit’s situational awareness in built up urban areas.

“Can you find the opportunity within the chaos? Because you can’t organize the chaos of the battlefield,” challenges the current Army Chief of Staff.<sup>64</sup> Situationally aware leaders recognize opportunity in the operational environment; and intelligent risk-taking enables adaptive leaders to exploit it. In both OEF and OIF, available intelligence led to the emergence of many missions on short notice. To balance the risk associated with these short-fused missions, commanders emphasized intent, a rapid orders process, and rehearsals. In the words of one OIF commander, “We did OPORDS for every mission we had time for, we did rehearsals for every mission regardless of time. We always reinforced commander’s intent for every mission.” The

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<sup>61</sup> Terrence Calliguire, E-mail correspondence with author on 8 November 2004, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> U.S. Army, A/1-505 PIR, Memorandum for Record: Top three OIF Lessons learned, 3 March 2004.

<sup>64</sup> Tom Shanker, “New Chief sets out to redesign a stretched thin Army,” *New York Times*, 28 January 2004, A19.

leaders leveraged technology to streamline their processes and minimize risk. “We always had...imagery, a building numbering system, a codeword brevity format and [execution] check for every mission regardless of planning time.”<sup>65</sup> Attachments of non-habitual units, such as Forensic Exploitation Teams (FET), civil affairs, PSYOP and Counter-Intelligence personnel added complexity to the mission. “Rehearsals, including movement formations and Assault Command Post (ACP) configurations were invaluable,” wrote one battalion operations officer.<sup>66</sup> By emphasizing intent and taking measures to reduce uncertainty, leaders in the 505thPIR were able to take intelligent risks to exploit “opportunity amidst the chaos.”

Another required component of the adaptive competency is the ability to know yourself and the adversary. This includes the technical and technological aspects of equipment, understanding the flexibility of the organization, and the capability to accomplish assigned missions. One company commander developed his knowledge of his organization’s capabilities “over time and through cross talk between delta platoons and infantry platoons, between infantry squads and weapons/machine gun teams, and between commanders and [the battalion commander].”<sup>67</sup> These leaders understood the capabilities organic to their units and the brigade, and they built flexibility within their organizations. During OEF, the Task Force’s assigned artillery battalion traded some of their howitzers for 120-millimeter mortars. This required artillerymen to learn new skills and rapidly master them for employment in sections “spread across the brigade’s area of operations.”<sup>68</sup> In the early stages of deployment, the brigade found itself working closely with special operations forces, and had to overcome initial unfamiliarity with the capabilities and limitations of special forces, civil affairs, and PSYOP elements.<sup>69</sup> The unit learned from this early education, and developed procedures to integrate these units in a

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<sup>65</sup> Dave Eaton, E-mail correspondence with author, 25 August, 2004, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>66</sup> 3-505 Operation Enduring Freedom After Action Review, 5 December 2002: 33.

<sup>67</sup> Dave Eaton, E-mail correspondence with author, 25 August, 2004, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>68</sup> George Mabry interview with 1/319th Artillery Battalion Commander on 27 March 2003 as part of USAIC Afghanistan Lessons Learned.

<sup>69</sup> William Carty interview with S3 of 3/505, session 6, on 7 April 2003, USAIC Afghanistan Lessons Learned, Fort Benning, GA.

synergistic fashion. Many units, down to the company level recognized the added value civil military operations brought to the mission.<sup>70</sup>

“It’s a thinking man’s game” the 505th PIR executive officer commented, referring to mental agility. The complexity of asymmetric warfare requires direct and organizational leaders to be mentally agile. Mentally agile leaders know not only when to act but also when it is prudent to change azimuth. One company in the 505th PIR conducted numerous night operations against adversaries in the Falloujah area. They noticed that during periods of the full moon, adversary resistance and weaponry accuracy increased. On subsequent operations, the leaders adjusted execution times, waiting for a new moon, in order to take full advantage of their “own the night” capability.<sup>71</sup>

Mentally agile leaders are also quick studies of their environment; they learn cultural norms and look for patterns or events that seem awry. “We learned virtually everything on the job,” responded one 505th PIR company commander, “We cross-talked between company commanders and leaders on the ground. We AAR’d every mission and questioned the intelligence read before any movement.”<sup>72</sup> This officer’s comments demonstrate the mental agility required of leaders who can learn in their environment, dispose of predictable operating patterns, and make manifest the mantra “it’s not what to think, but how to think.”

Adaptive leaders possessing strength of character do not succumb to paralyzes in the midst of ambiguity. They retain the ability to act as incoming information continues to crystallize the situation. They recognize that although some situations require adaptation, others call for persistence. Leaders with strength of character demand high standards of professional conduct from themselves and their soldiers. After a brutal close combat action in Afghanistan left several soldiers wounded by grenade shrapnel and three adversaries under 505th PIR control, a platoon leaders observed one of his emotionally charged soldiers strike a captured combatant. Although

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<sup>70</sup> Guy Jones, E-mail interview with author on 19 November 2004, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>71</sup> Terrence Calliguire, E-mail.

<sup>72</sup> Dave Eaton, E-mail.

experiencing similar emotions, the platoon leader immediately censured the soldier and replaced him with another to guard the prisoners. In the aftermath, the platoon leader and company commander recommended the soldier for a Field Grade Article 15. The battalion commander agreed. The soldier received extra duty and administrative re-assignment within the battalion. The leaders maintained discipline within the unit; and, the soldiers, knowing their leaders possessed strong character, understood prisoner abuse would not be tolerated in this unit. Commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq “did [their] best to ensure dignity and respect among the populace and those taken into [their] custody. But for the most part just a common sense and civilized approach towards interaction with those [they] came into contact with.”<sup>73</sup>

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM presented the direct and organizational level leaders of the 505th PIR complex, challenging, and asymmetric operating environments. The leaders were able to adapt and successfully navigate their soldiers through these environments. They displayed situational awareness, took intelligent risks, and knew the capabilities of their units and their adversaries. They exercised mental agility and possessed strength of character in the planning, preparation, and execution of their assigned missions. These leaders displayed each of the five components of the adaptive competency the U.S. Army should codify for its direct and organizational level leaders to be successful in asymmetric operating environments.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenges faced by U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders in OEF and OIF combined to create an environment permeated by ambiguity and replete with uncertainty. Diverse and often fleeting adversaries employed methods of asymmetry to further muddle a complex operational environment. U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders were equipped with the competency to adapt successfully in these asymmetric environments. Now U.S. Army leadership doctrine needs to evolve as well.

Current Army leadership doctrine remains relevant, but must mature to meet the demands of the contemporary operational environment. Army senior leadership, asymmetric threats, and recent experience in OEF and OIF beckon change. Emerging leadership doctrine should include adaptability as a competency consisting of five components. These five components are: maintain situational awareness, know yourself and the adversary, take intelligent risks, exercise mental agility, and demonstrate strength of character. Doctrine cannot prognosticate the exact nature and form of asymmetric conflict, but it can forecast traits and conceptual knowledge that will empower leaders to maintain the initiative and dictate the parameters for action.

This monograph focused mainly upon determining the components of the adaptive competency. However, several recommendations emerge from the analysis. Future operational environments demand U.S. Army direct and organizational level leaders with the capacity to think, decide, and act in environments permeated by ambiguity and uncertainty. It is no surprise therefore, that General Schoomaker challenges all Army leaders to be capable of finding opportunity amidst chaos. This study affirms his azimuth and urges senior leaders to continue making the development of adaptive leaders their top priority.

This study also confirms current Army leadership doctrine requires revision. Although the concept of leader competencies is rooted in operational and command and control doctrine, FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*, makes no specific mention of competencies. Currently, the

Army’s emerging leadership doctrine (FM 6-22) adopts a competency framework; however, the framework does not include adaptability as a competency.

Additionally, this research posited a working definition of adaptive leadership: the capacity to recognize changing patterns in the operational environment and to take proactive steps to maintain the initiative and dictate the terms of the operation. Emerging doctrine must refine the definition of adaptive leadership.

Furthermore, emerging leadership doctrine should include five components and sample actions for the adaptive competency. Following is a starting point for their development:

<b>Component</b>	<b>Sample Actions</b>
Maintain situational awareness	Distills meaning from unfolding events and acts accordingly. Manages, analyzes information. Maintains relevant cultural awareness.
Know yourself and the adversary	Understands adversary technical and technological capabilities, requirements, and limitations. Understands the context of adversary actions.
Take intelligent risks	Takes positive measures to reduce uncertainty. Establishes and communicates clear intent. Builds flexible and integrated teams. Conducts mission rehearsals to minimize unexpected risk.
Exercise mental agility	Expands conceptual knowledge and critical thinking abilities. Does not imprint existing beliefs or biases on adversary or culture. Translates complex situations and provides meaningful explanation to soldiers. Recognizes when it is prudent to change the course of action.
Demonstrate strength of character	Upholds the values of the Nation and the Army. Maintains and enforces high professional and moral standards. Willing to accept reasonable setbacks. Demonstrates resolve in the face of adversity.

Figure 1. Components of the Adaptive Competency<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Jeffrey Horey, Jon J. Fallenson, Ray Morath, Brian Cronin, Robert Cassella, W. Franks, Jr., and J. Smith, Competency Based Future Leadership Requirements: Technical Report 1148 (Arlington, VA: US Army Research for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 2004): 55-63. The author’s introduce the

One criticism of the research in this monograph is that it is based on anecdotal evidence to determine the components of the adaptive competency. For this reason further research is recommended. The U.S. Army should commission research-based methods to refine the components of the adaptive competency proffered herein.

Finally, even as the new leadership doctrine is being developed, commanders at all levels should strive to develop the components of the adaptive competency in their direct and organizational level leaders by putting these leaders in uncertain and unfamiliar circumstances, and compelling them to think creatively to find opportunities amidst the chaos.

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