

THE ROLE OF VALUES IN OPERATIONS – TODAY, TOMORROW AND BEYOND

BY

COLONEL JEFFREY E. VUONO
United States Army

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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THE ROLE OF VALUES IN OPERATIONS – TODAY, TOMORROW AND BEYOND

BY

Colonel Jeffrey E. Vuono
United States Army

Nathan Freier
Project Adviser

Disclaimer

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U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

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In any significant government run operation, all actions seem to be driven by values either in a positive or negative way depending on an individual's perspective. As we look at current military operations around the world, it is clear that values drive decision making from the strategic to the tactical level. Whether you take an historical perspective on the subject of armed conflict, break down today's actions in Afghanistan, or look at the future character of warfare, it is important to recognize that values play a central role. If Samuel Huntington were to make predictions on the next fifty years, his revised/updated framework may begin to radically de-emphasize the Westphalian nation state as they continue to decline in relative power and envision the continuing emergence of transnational structures that continue to exert their influence worldwide. Whether it is Walmart, Google, Microsoft or BP, multinational corporations that are focused on generating revenue or more overtly sinister organizations such as Al Qaeda or an emerging piracy network, the interpretation of values and their role in engagements will continue to be prominent. In order to prevail in an era of persistent conflict, the United States must continue to not only embrace a values-based approach but also to inculcate a universal set of values across the entire security establishment.

Many of these have served us so well thus far and particularly well in the current conflicts.

THE ROLE OF VALUES IN OPERATIONS – TODAY, TOMORROW AND BEYOND

What is a Value?

In any significant government run operation, all actions seem to be driven by values either in a positive or negative way depending on an individual's perspective. As we look at current military operations around the world, it is clear that values drive decision making from the strategic to the tactical level. Despite the fact that most people make choices that are in their personal interest - and most likely aligned with the interests associated with their identity - these choices are clearly guided by a set of core values that they developed over time.

So, what exactly is a value? From the 2010 Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, a value is defined as "...something intrinsically valuable or desirable.." ¹ Therefore, if we accept this definition as an adequate description of the term, the inclination is to view values from an inherently positive perspective. However, it is clear that we must take a much broader view drawing from historical and current perspectives as we attempt to understand the role of values in an uncertain future environment and the use of values in our responses to it. For example, group values are inherently political. Once we come to appreciate the significance of values-based decision making, then we can determine the best way to prepare our leaders and soldiers to apply the right values at the right time. Doing this is a step toward ensuring that they all collectively reach desired outcomes in future operations that are rooted in deeper meaning and shun expediency.

¹ "value." [Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/value). 2010. Merriam-Webster Online. 25 June 2010
<<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/value>>

A Clash of Values

As we examine military operations throughout history, it is evident that values have played an important role in shaping decisions at all levels. Values, therefore, have affected virtually every military outcome in the past. In 1996, Samuel Huntington published the book, *The Clash of Civilizations and The Remaking of World Order*. In it, Huntington contended that the Cold War essentially contained the true nature of many peoples around the world.² In 1989, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Huntington foreshadowed a future of persistent conflict based fundamentally on the different values-based perspectives of people from different civilizations.

Looking back at his work fourteen years later, it appears that Huntington's framework has some enduring merit to it (with comment, of course.) The post-9/11 period is particularly well-suited to an interpretation of Huntington. Though not a universal civilization struggle as Huntington suggests, the 'clash' after 9/11 has seen constituencies within two of his major civilization's — Western and Islamic — come into conflict. Furthermore, it seems clear that the fundamental nature of the conflict between the West and the most extreme representatives of political Islam has emerged as a clash of values. In part, this struggle emerges from the way in which each group interprets general values rather than selecting specific ones to pit against one another. To illustrate this concept of values and the concept of competition between different value sets, it is necessary to explore their development in real and personal terms.

How Personal Values Develop: The Bishop's and Military Science

² Huntington, Samuel P. (2002) [1997]. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (The Free Press ed.). London: Simon & Schuster.

In January 2010, I had the privilege of meeting with cadets at the United States Military Academy. In one session, I briefed a group of cadets who were going in to the field artillery. I talked to them about leadership and expectations. Then, I asked them what questions they had for me. The last question was, "What should we be doing from now until we are commissioned this summer?" Knowing that the majority of this group would see combat within the year, I told them to have fun but also encouraged them to look for opportunities that would help them to think critically. Specifically, I encouraged them to consider what they have learned at West Point in a new, more demanding context because their values would be challenged in ways they never imagined.

As I departed West Point the next morning, I had a long car drive back to Washington. I thought about how I had answered that question. I remembered how I had developed my values growing up and, then, how they were formed during my college years at the University of Notre Dame. Then, as I thought about which branch of the Army I wanted to enter, I thought the field artillery was the best fit for me. I believed it provided the best opportunity to understand the entire battlefield and nature of war. However, I vividly remembered considering the destructive power of nuclear weapons. During the Cold War, much of the Army artillery was capable of delivering nuclear weapons against tactical-level targets. I recognized even then that, as a young officer, I might have to come to grips with the release and use of nuclear weapons under my control as an artillery special weapons officer.

At the time, in either Germany or Korea, I might be asked to employ an M109 series howitzer to fire a 155 millimeter tactical nuclear weapon; a significant burden for a 22 year old. My struggle with values began early in my college career as I

contemplated the gravity of what I might be told to do in a few short years. In 1983, the American catholic bishops published a document called "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response." In it, the bishops dealt with the concept of Just War Theory and proportionality in nuclear war. Specifically, with regard to military service, it stated: "All those who enter the military service in loyalty to their country should look upon themselves as the custodians of the security and freedom of their fellow countrymen; and when they carry out their duty properly, they are contributing to the maintenance of peace."³ I appreciated this comment for how direct it was; not in terms of a certain religious perspective but in the context of how it valued service to our great nation over devotion to personal interests. The bishop's 1983 view of military service has helped me build and maintain the moral foundation that underwrites my career today.

All members of the military will work through many of the same philosophical, moral and ethical concerns that I had encountered in college. I realize now that this journey was more than just a critique of the values I possessed before going to college or the changes that occurred in my values through exposure to various readings and lectures while there. It proved to be foundational to formation of the core values I carry through to this day. For example, I remember being first introduced to the principles of leadership from Field Manual (FM) 22-100 in my freshman military science class.⁴ My first reaction to the Army's principles of leadership was that they were all intuitive and universal. They were like the principles I had learned as a boy scout.

³ The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops May 3, 1983 Copyright © 1983 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Inc.; Washington, D.C. All rights reserved. p. 2

⁴ FM 22-100, Military Leadership, 31 Oct 1983, (Washington, DC: GPO), Chapter 2

The Scout law too was pretty intuitive and universal. It was easy to memorize precisely because it made so much sense — “A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.”⁵ The Army’s leadership principles are similar: set the example, know yourself and seek improvement, take responsibility for yourself, and ensure the task is understood, supervised and accomplished were all pretty straight-forward as well.⁶ They were so simple (yet powerful) that it seemed odd that the Army would have to review and teach them over and over again.

“This is the real Army Lieutenant!”

Upon graduation and commissioning, I remember feeling good about everything I received from my ROTC instruction. However, I do not remember giving either the leadership principles or the specific values related to them a second thought. I knew they were there. They were certainly an integral part of who I was as a young officer. But, they were a backdrop more than anything else.

As a lieutenant stationed in Germany, I quickly realized that I had led a sheltered life during those formative college years. The real world, military or otherwise, was different than anything I had encountered at Notre Dame. It was clear that many new challenges would confront me over time. I remember my early frustration with how the Army actually ran in Germany in the 1980’s. Though I still valued the institution, I was amazed at how much values, ethics and morals were compromised on a day to day basis. This did not seem anything like the Army that my ROTC cadre had so carefully

⁵ Excerpted from page 47-54, Boy Scout Handbook, 11th Edition, (#33105), copyright 1998 by BSA, ISBN 0-8395-3105-2

⁶ FM 22-100, Military Leadership, 31 Oct 1983 (Washington, DC: GPO), Chapter 2

prepared me to operate in. At the time, accomplishing the mission while still staying true to my values was a constant struggle.

When confronted by this reality, I had to accept that I just could not get things done when and how they were “supposed” to be done. In my first duty position, I was a battalion maintenance officer. I was charged with maintaining the battalion’s equipment readiness. The heavy mechanized Army literally runs on track, track pads, and torsion bars. In my new world, the most expedient route to getting a couple of torsion bars went through the German national contractor who ran the maintenance depot. The price to get torsion bars off of his shelf was a bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey. At the time, U.S. liquor was strictly rationed in Germany. I was told specifically that I was never to use it to barter. Yet, there I was on the verge of bribery in the name of unit readiness.

However, there was a certain immunity that came with being a second lieutenant. Ignorance was generally a reasonable defense. I did my best to express my genuine confusion about the whole transaction. It all made no sense to me. So, the contractor showed pity on me and waived the usual payment due to my youth and naiveté.

In other cases, I learned that there were ways to bend the rules a bit in the interest of taking care of soldiers. In the middle of a particularly harsh winter, when soldiers were freezing during training, I knew that increasing the priority of requisitions for new heaters pushed their arrival forward significantly – days rather than weeks. More than one colleague told me changing the priority like this was not consistent with their interpretation of regulations. In their view, heaters were the lowest priority. For me, however, taking care of soldiers was a principle of leadership and a core value. At

that time, as a battalion maintenance officer, changing a code to get the heaters into the field faster was a non-negotiable quality of life issue and, ultimately, a unit readiness choice on behalf of those most deserving of preferential treatment.

The Chiefs of Staff Give Us Some Timely Guidance

On 13 January 1998, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Dennis Reimer, approved the seven Army Values and their definitions. The Values are listed, and displayed, in specific order (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless-Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage) to form the acronym LDRSHIP (pronounced LEADERSHIP) using the first letter of each Value.⁷ At the time, I did not realize the significance of this designation. Thanks to General Reimer, the Army has incorporated these values and each Army Chief of Staff has reinforced them since.

When I first took battalion command in 2004 and during monthly briefings to incoming soldiers, I used these seven values, as well as the new Soldier's Creed published by General Peter Schoomaker as the basis for my soldier and leader orientations.⁸ These were central to my command philosophy and the command climate I was trying to create. They also served as the core of my leadership philosophy. I had my soldiers recite the creed and the values every chance I got. I constantly underscored the importance of each one of them. In my view, the seven values and the creed set the American Army apart from other armies.

Leadership and Values In Recent Combat Operations.

In 2005, my battalion received orders to deploy to Iraq. Indirect howitzer fire, the core business of my field artillery battalion, was not commonly employed in Iraq. As a

⁷ Dennis J. Reimer, "Developing Great Leaders in Turbulent Times," *Military Review*, (Jan/Feb 1998)

⁸ Infantry Magazine, 22 DEC 03, The Soldier's Creed

consequence, I had no doubt that the battalion would be split up and task organized to perform a variety of missions across the spectrum of conflict. As we began to prepare for the deployment, we did the best we could on preparing for the wide variety of tasks we would likely be asked to perform: counterinsurgency, stabilization, unit partnering and mentoring, etc.

Across all of these missions, I quickly realized that nothing was more important than maintaining the Army's values and the Soldier's Creed as central elements of our preparation. I assumed that if I continued to talk to those values at every opportunity -- before, during, and after the deployment — then the soldiers would continue to embrace them. What I failed to recognize was how much my own values would be tested in Iraq.

There, the challenge for leaders at all levels is distilling the most essential pieces of information from the complex series of fragmentary orders (FRAGOs), rules of engagement, and policy directives. Daily, we received FRAGOs, with numerous directives embedded in them. In some cases, they would refine rules of engagement to the point where I had to personally review each one and interpret them along with my battalion's senior leadership to ensure we were in compliance.

Although this process was tedious, I was able to fall back on the Army values and the Soldier's Creed to help cut through the complexity and develop specific commander's guidance. In fact, I knew that we would be fine as long as I focused on developing and implementing values-based guidance that was clear to soldiers as they operated in an environment of uncertainty. This was especially important when we dealt directly with the local population, treating Iraqis as we ourselves would like to be treated.

As I hear and read about failure inside some military organizations, it is clear to me that some army leaders get into real trouble when they stray away from or ignore the Army's seven core values and the Soldier's Creed. On most of these occasions, it appears that leaders are not enforcing the values-based standards that I have come to appreciate more and more throughout my career. In the case of Abu Gharaib, for example, leaders clearly were not checking and ensuring that all those under their supervision were following Army values. In other instances, I have read about leaders under stress who understandably get emotional about losses in their ranks but, contrary to core values, take matters into their own hands with acts of retribution.⁹

In both cases, there are strategic-level implications associated with acting outside of Army values. This inevitably leads to undesirable second and third order effects. Yet, often the significance of lapses in values like this remains unrecognized by those most responsible for enforcing "good order and discipline." Or, at a minimum, it goes unrecognized until the worst outcomes associated with the lapse are impossible to reverse. Abu Gharaib is particularly emblematic in this regard. I understand the frustrations of leaders under stress in the field. But, I also know that adhering to core values provides a moral bedrock for strategic victory.

In Iraq, I learned that leaders must adapt to the times. In 1991 and again in early 2003, the United States fought a conventional contest against an Iraqi regime that had long oppressed its own people. By the time I returned to Iraq in 2006, I realized that the war was different. It was now decidedly unconventional. We were fighting individuals and groups spurred on by wildly divergent motivations.

⁹ As an example, in an incident in 2003, LTC Allen West, a battalion commander was involved in such conduct. "West admittedly fired a pistol near the policeman's head, threatened his life, and allowed his troops to physically assault the man." <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allen_West_\(politician\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allen_West_(politician))>

For example, one insurgent we interviewed told an interesting story about why he emplaced improvised explosive devices (IEDs). He said that the “terrorists” will pay him a month’s pay to emplace it. If he died in the process, his family got ten times that amount for his martyrdom. He also stated that the U.S. soldiers have the best equipment in the world to protect them -- from their personal body armor to their up-armored vehicles. He knew they would likely survive most attacks. If they are injured, however, they get the best medical care in the world; if they happen to die, their families are taken care of through a very large insurance payment. They are also treated as heroes by their family, their local community and their Nation. After hearing the story, it makes you question the black and white mentality that comes with strict adherence to one universal interpretation of values.

I was struck by how profoundly ‘matter of fact’ his tone was. There is a level of honor — even core values — associated with his perspective that I had not recognized but now suddenly could associate with. For him, emplacing an IED equated to taking care of his family in the most effective way possible at the time.

This vignette illustrates how values are not black and white in the real world. Suddenly, Jack Daniels for torsion bars and bending priorities to keep soldiers warm made more sense. There are so many shades of gray that all soldiers and leaders wade through in all operations. Each situation has a number of sides that should be considered — sometimes challenged -- before making life and death decisions. In Iraq, I came to realize more and more that my values would get me and my soldiers through the deployment. But, I also realized that values do require interpretation in different contexts. They remain immutable but, in some ways, also context-dependent.

In the end, the battalion was very fortunate not to have lost a single soldier during that deployment. Just as important to me, the battalion did not experience a serious lapse in values. I believe these two facts are linked.

It all means something....

As I reflect on operations in Iraq and elsewhere around the world, it is clear that soldiers and leaders must make hard decisions that often profoundly stress and stretch their fundamental values and ethical standards. As they conduct a school ribbon cutting ceremony in the morning, have lunch with a sheiks' council discussing economic development in the afternoon, and then have a battle with insurgents throughout the night, Army leaders must fall back on something. Particularly, in light of the fact, that the insurgents are possibly members of the very tribes that helped build the school and benefit from the economic development. Some appreciation for core values is a good start.

To a child in pre-school or elementary school, there are "good" guys and "bad" guys. When people are being killed, and service members leave their homes to fight, that same "good versus evil" construct helps young dependent children cope with their mommy or daddy leaving for the war. On the other hand, however, things are never quite that black and white. There is a lot of "gray" out there. Military leaders and soldiers must look at the world as pure economists do. Different people are motivated by competing interests and different values. Uncritically, these can appear to be very different from our own. Closer examination, however, tells a different story.

On many occasions during the last deployment, I would have meetings with sheiks and local leaders who I knew were involved in the attacks on my soldiers. I knew

they probably had given orders that injured or killed U.S. soldiers or innocent Iraqi civilians. But, I also knew that I had to deal with them. The road to solving difficult problems frequently ran through them. It is a hard but essential pill to swallow.

Luckily, the most successful commanders, leaders and soldiers at all levels have learned to accept this fact and have embraced the ability to deal effectively in shades of gray. We are not operating in a vacuum. Soldiers are confronted with complex problems in the current operating environment every day. In Iraq and Afghanistan, insurgents operate in and among the people. Leaders must make decisions on what they perceive to be the best course of action given circumstances often with very little specific guidance from above. In my experience, they will be fine, as long as they do not compromise core values but also see those values in context.

Do universal values exist?

In May 2010, the Obama Administration published a “new” National Security Strategy (NSS.) The day before it was published, Mr. John Brennan, the Assistant to the President and the Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Counter-Terrorism spoke about the NSS at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.¹⁰ Several times, he referred to the importance of values as a vital national interest. He also asserted that remaining faithful to them was a core element of our strategy now and in the future.

The new NSS speaks to the importance of values and the prominent role that they will play in the future. The strategy also dedicates an entire section to the idea that

¹⁰ John Brennan, CSIS hosted a Statesmen's Forum with John O. Brennan Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism On Securing the Homeland by Renewing American Strength, Resilience, and Values Center for Strategic and International Studies on Wednesday, May 26, 2010, 1800 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., <<http://csis.org/event/statesmens-forum-securing-homeland-renewing-americas-strengths-resilience-and-values>>

certain values are universal and that the United States intends to lead by example and uphold those values. Mr. Brennan referred to the future of persistent conflict implying that it would be a struggle of values that will be multi-generational.¹¹ This notion clearly supports the idea — raised in the beginning of this paper — that a clash of values is now driving much of the conflict that the United States finds itself involved in.

Therefore, the United States government believes the challenge of values will not change in the foreseeable future.

How To Prepare Value Based Soldiers and Leaders for The Next War?

If you conduct a search on the internet for the role of values in warfare or anything resembling that, you will come up short in terms of references other than the latest NSS. It fascinates me that so little has been written about the subject. It also deeply concerns me in light of where we are now and the future conflicts we perceive we will need to fight.

In December of 2009, the Army published its overarching concept of future operations, “The Army Capstone Concept” or ACC. Its sub-title highlights the ACC’s core message – “Operational Adaptability: Operating under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict 2016-2028.”¹² In his foreword, the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Commander, General Martin Dempsey, addresses the importance of the Army being ‘prepared to (conduct) decentralized operations to adapt to complex and rapidly changing situations.’¹³ He talks about leaders who are adaptable, have the authority to act and develop the mindset to act.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² U.S. Army Training and Doctrine (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-0, The Army Capstone Concept, Operational Adaptability: Operating under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict 2016-2028, 21 December 2009

¹³ Ibid, p. ii

The ACC does not address the specific need for soldiers and leaders to operate according to a sound, well-established set of core values.

As we continue examining the potential operations and adversaries associated with an era of persistent conflict, we should rely on more than battle drills; the latest tactics, techniques, procedures; or a new piece of equipment to prevail. We have learned some difficult lessons in the past forty years of warfare. The most important lesson is that prevailing on the battlefield in a clash of arms is insufficient by itself. As we examine the Vietnam conflict, we did prevail militarily but lost the strategic communications battle which I believe was fought specifically through a conflict of values. U.S. actions in following a set of (universal) American values have shown what distinguishes us from other combatant groups.

In Afghanistan, our service members are showing it every day, as they implement the strategy that the International Stabilization Force Afghanistan Commander, General Stanley McChrystal, outlined in his initial guidance.¹⁴ He argues that protecting the population and discretion in the use of force are two key measures necessary to win there.¹⁵ In my view this demonstrates the values-based method of warfare that will continue to be the standard in future U.S. operations. As long as service members and leaders are empowered with freedom of action to use force within the context of those values, they will be successful. With too many constraints in the use of force, service members may become frustrated ultimately resulting in mission failure.

¹⁴ Stanley McChrystal, General, U.S. Army, International Security Assistance Force Commander's Initial Guidance, 13 JUN 09

¹⁵ Ibid.

This need for values-based warfare is not a fleeting thought. As we look forward to the future operational environment, I believe it must be central to our operations. As the ACC envisions, we will continue to conduct counterinsurgency operations against a determined enemy. We have learned this lesson in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, we must institutionalize this in our training and leader development programs. It is easy to say what must be done but it is difficult to steer institutions in the right direction. The United States military will continue to be an All-Volunteer Force for the time being. Luckily, the men and women who are part of the military come from segments of the population that are adaptable, flexible and tolerant.

In his recent book, A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq, Mr. Mark Moyar refers to “Leader Centric Warfare” and the importance of integrity among other qualities of effective counterinsurgent leaders. He states that “..Leaders of integrity, whose conscience tells them that (certain) acts are wrong resists temptations toward corruption and harsh treatment of prisoners.”¹⁶ Clearly, this integrity is founded in the values of those leaders.

As we examine the best qualities of the most effective leaders today, the advantage of creating the conditions to develop the soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines of tomorrow who adhere to basic values are clear. To build tomorrow’s values-based service member, it is critical to be discerning how a member is selected in the recruitment process. Our society is generally tolerant and it is important to have a process that focuses on attracting the most capable people possible. Once recruited, these individuals need to be exposed to a core set of common values as early as possible in the training process. Throughout the course of their careers, they need to

¹⁶ Mark Moyar, A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq, 2009, p. 11

have these values reinforced as much as possible. It is equally important to frequently challenge those values under stress. Therefore, exposing the member to opposing values or testing those values through realistic training environment is critical to setting them up for success when they must make the best decisions that they can without specific orders.

Values in the Era of Persistent Conflict

Whether you take an historical perspective on the subject of armed conflict, break down today's actions in Afghanistan, or look at the future character of warfare, it is important to recognize that values play a central role. If Samuel Huntington were to make predictions on the next fifty years, his revised/updated framework may begin to radically de-emphasize the Westphalian nation state as they continue to decline in relative power and envision the continuing emergence of transnational structures that continue to exert their influence worldwide. Whether it is Walmart, Google, Microsoft or BP, multinational corporations that are focused on generating revenue or more overtly sinister organizations such as Al Qaeda or an emerging piracy network, the interpretation of values and their role in armed engagements will continue to be prominent. In order to prevail in an era of persistent conflict, the United States must continue to not only embrace a values-based approach but also to inculcate a universal set of values across the entire security establishment. Many of these have served us well thus far and stand out as particularly important in the current conflicts.