Prospects For Military Reform

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Throughout history, military catastrophe has prodded defeated armies to reform themselves. An apparent irony of the decade following the catastrophic US failure in Vietnam is that the most vocal advocates of overhauling American military institutions have been not soldiers but civilians. Epitomizing this interest has been the so-called military reform movement, a loose coalition of Washington-based writers and consultants—Edward Luttwak, Jeffrey Record, William Lind, and Steven Canby, to name a few—along with political allies such as former Senator Gary Hart.

Diligently nonpartisan in the best tradition of politics stopping at the water's edge, these self-styled reformers claim—wrongly, as we shall see—that the military is incapable of reforming itself and that they alone can fix what's wrong with our military policies. They have seized the high ground in the contemporary debate over defense issues, calling for changes in the very framework of that debate. The reformers consider old questions such as how much to spend or how to reduce waste to be irrelevant. The real issue is *effectiveness*—getting a dollar's worth of capability for each dollar spent.

In terms of effectiveness, the reformers assess American military performance in recent years as sadly lacking. To illustrate that point, they have culled through the record of that performance since 1945, shrewdly emphasizing themes that have built-in appeal stemming from a lingering association with Vietnam: rampant military bureaucratization, the bankruptcy of efforts to quantify war, and all of that conflict's insidious excesses—too much firepower, too much equipment seldom suited for the job

at hand, and too many people rotating through the war zone with no clear idea of what they were about. Furthermore, the reformers emphasize, the causes of failure in Vietnam continue to plague the military today, forming part of an abiding and grossly defective American military tradition.

This notion of a single flawed military tradition stems from a misreading of American history, but is essential to the reformers' argument. Not in Vietnam alone, they say, has the American military shown a preference for wasteful and ineffective firepower-attrition tactics. Rather, American tactics as long ago as the Civil War and as recently as Grenada have consistently failed to take advantage of methods promising more decisive results at less cost. The style of leadership shown in Vietnam, according to the reformers, suggested deficiencies extending beyond the particular conditions of that war. The high command's preoccupation with statistical trends and analyses reflected a penchant to see war as an immense managerial problem. The practice of providing two or three layers of heliborne senior officers to "control" a small firefight on the ground illustrated the recurring American inability to grasp the advantages of decentralized execution. In the area of technology especially, the reformers ransack the record of Vietnam to point out other deeply rooted flaws. Throughout the war, the United States used gadgetry to try to make good its lack of a coherent strategy and pertinent tactics. Today, the reformers insist, the United States still puts its faith in technological sophistication to compensate for other shortcomings. The result, however, only makes things worse: the supreme importance attributed to efficient resource management leads Americans to neglect crucial intangibles such as cohesion and leadership.

The reformers insist that only a fundamental reorientation of our military policies can correct such deficiencies. To reverse the trend that has led soldiers increasingly to become bureaucrats and "bean counters," the reformers would reduce overstuffed headquarters. They would substitute an appreciation of history for misapplied concepts of systems analysis. And they would end the infatuation with technology of dubious utility in favor of a renaissance in military art—clarity of strategic purpose, simplicity in equipment and method, tactical competence, and a sensitivity to unquantifiable factors such as leadership, cohesion, and esprit.

The reformers have purveyed these as New Ideas. In consequence, they have attracted widespread attention from those inclined to receive

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uncritically anything with the appearance of innovation. Books by reformers are widely reviewed. Influential periodicals welcome their contributions. The reformers themselves appear frequently at defense-related symposia and on the networks, airing views that columnists and television commentators subsequently amplify. Ever prone to oversimplify, the media easily—almost reflexively—acquiesce in the reformers' efforts to depict "The Pentagon" as the heavy in the ongoing drama-debate over defense reform. By endorsing the reformers' portrait of a hidebound military establishment mired in bureaucracy and preoccupied with careerist goals, the media reinforce the notion that the military is beyond hope of reforming itself. As if by default, the reformers themselves control the field, apparently sole possessors of the wisdom required to correct the military's folly.

Yet, for all the ink and air time, the reform movement to date has achieved little. Although the reformers will likely remain fixtures in the constellation of experts hovering around official Washington, their prospects for achieving anything substantive appear increasingly remote.

There are several reasons for this. The most obvious stem from doubts about the reformers' credibility and from their abrasiveness in publicizing their views. Questions about credibility arise if only because of the sparseness of the reformers' firsthand military experience. More than a few have never served on active duty. Their expertise is largely of the self-taught variety. Although some observers might argue that clear thinking on military issues and immersion in military institutions are mutually exclusive, at some point—at least for some people—experience counts. In the eyes of such people, the reformers find themselves at a severe disadvantage. Officials who judge an argument on more than just cleverness of presentation are liable to dismiss the reformers as gifted amateurs. Military affairs resembles any other specialized field of endeavor in that respect: the views of those who lack the prerequisites for the priesthood will tend to be undervalued.

Compounding the problem is the reform movement's persistent inability to articulate remedies that can serve as concrete prescriptions for action. The strength of the movement lies in the skill with which its members dissect examples of military ineptitude layer by layer, exposing the whole in embarrassing detail. When it comes to proposing corrective action, however, such detail is not much in evidence. Reformers content themselves with prescriptions that are too elusive to offer practical help. In tactics, for example, as an alternative to the justly lambasted concept of firepower-attrition, the reformers support something they call maneuver warfare. The concept of maneuver is itself a slippery one that the reformers describe using terms such as elasticity, convergence, and relational movement.

But how does an army actually implement maneuver doctrine? Reformers answer that question by citing such things as the need for commanders endowed with *Fingerspitzengefühl* (an instinctive "feel" for battle); tactical agility derived from the use of "mission orders" (telling subordinates *what* to do but allowing them to figure out *how* to do it); and an emphasis on "getting inside" the enemy's "decision cycle" to bring about his progressive disorientation, paralysis, and ultimate collapse without the messiness of slugging it out toe-to-toe. As described by practiced reformers, maneuver warfare *sounds* altogether elegant. It makes battle intelligible by rising above the uncertainty and chaos that have marked the historical experience of armed conflict. The frictionless and uncluttered game board that is the reformers' battlefield allows commanders to survey the battle with omniscience and units to move with unerring precision. It is an irresistible picture.

Yet the most elementary efforts to move from theory to practice expose it as an unrealistic picture as well. Although peacetime exercises cannot replicate the fog of battle, they generate enough complexity and confusion to give any but the least perceptive soldier an appreciation of the challenges of combat command. Truly, nothing is easy in war. Although the theory of maneuver warfare may have merit, execution is fraught with difficulties for which glibness and suggestive phrases provide no antidote. The reformers' refusal to address such difficulties undermines the credibility of their overall critique.

Among military professionals, the manner in which reformers express their views exacerbates the tendency to give short shrift to reform proposals. Overstatement makes sense as a device for attracting media attention. Unfortunately, the verbal fireworks that score points on Op-Ed pages or television interviews also alienate military professionals, even reform-minded ones. The average corporal may find amusement in the deftness with which reformers skewer "The Pentagon." *He* is not being criticized. The generals and admirals who lead the services are inclined to feel themselves the butt of such attacks, however, and come to see reformers as adversaries rather than as a source of useful ideas. Thus, the combativeness so helpful in gaining media exposure also obstructs the creation of potential alliances between reformers and like-minded military professionals.

This ill-feeling would hardly matter if the reformers were correct in believing that the nation will acquire an effective military only when it *imposes* change upon the services, forcing them to abandon traditional bad habits. In fact, the likelihood of bringing about fundamental military reform without the consent and wholehearted cooperation of the services is nil. This error is crucial to the reformers' prospects: far more than suspect credentials or caustic rhetoric, this groundless faith in the feasibility of imposed change condemns the reformers to ineffectiveness.

The annual debate in Washington over defense spending should not obscure the extent to which the services today operate as autonomous, self-governing entities. Notwithstanding the careful scrutiny that the budget undergoes, large areas of military activity receive scant supervision. Indeed, many of the subjects that the reformers themselves point to as critical to genuine military effectiveness remain largely the preserve of the uniformed services. Each service answers for itself the critical questions of how to organize its forces, what weapons to develop, what tactics to employ, what personnel policies to adopt, and how to educate its officers and prepare its units for combat. In such matters, the services resist anything more than perfunctory oversight. Even when civilian officials make the effort to overcome that resistance, they seldom sustain the attention or master the detail needed to assume responsibility for the internal governance of the services.

The situation compares to the state's capacity to reform education. Government can build schools or close them. It can increase or reduce spending on education. It can mandate a curriculum and set competency standards for teachers. Despite all these efforts, the quality of education ultimately reflects the peculiar chemistry of a classroom, something beyond the effective reach of forces outside of the schoolhouse. So it is with the military: the factors essential to true military effectiveness will remain beyond the reach of those not in uniform.

A defense establishment wedded to a defective tradition that it will not abandon would seem to present insuperable difficulties to those who hope for improved military effectiveness. Yet the problem is an illusory one of the reform movement's own making. Upon closer examination, the reformers' assertion that the military cannot reform itself exposes itself as self-serving and unsubstantiated. In fact, the contention that the military is inescapably bound to its bad habits springs from a biased and one-sided reading of the past.

Despite a ritual emphasis on history, the reformers omit half the story. They are narrowly selective in choosing the evidence on which to base their critique. Although they build their case on indisputable elements of the American military tradition—perhaps even the dominant ones—the reformers err in overlooking the existence of a dissenting tradition, one that is no less important for being in the minority. For this alternative tradition represents the institutionalized resistance to precisely those tendencies that the reformers find objectionable.

What is the content of this alternative tradition? To a marked degree, it is a tradition that prefers the individual soldier to mass organization and that insists upon the primacy of man's role (over that of machines) in determining war's outcome. Best illustrating the substance of

this alternative tradition are the historical figures who have personified its character. Foremost among them is George S. Patton.

To judge by the successful movie of a decade ago, the popular view of Patton is that of a gifted commander who was also a monumental misfit. George C. Scott portrays Patton as an eccentric who is out of touch with the American character. His egomania and mysticism contrast unfavorably with the modest and benevolent Omar Bradley, as played by Karl Malden. For all of Patton's genius, it is Bradley who represents the proper American soldier. Because Patton can never conform to such a mold, his eventual fall from grace, if regrettable, seems foreordained.

Those within the military who look upon Patton as an exponent of the alternative tradition are untroubled by such ambivalence. Interested primarily in Patton the combat leader, they view his excesses as trivial in comparison with his achievements. As a commander, Patton symbolizes opposition to those forces—often condemned by the reformers—that threaten to displace traditional considerations so important to real military effectiveness. When others preached caution, Patton acted boldly. While too many of his wartime contemporaries were learning their profession at the expense of soldiers' lives, Patton stood out as a master of the military

General George S. Patton's mystique lives on. For many American soldiers, he remains the model of a combat leader.

art. And as other senior officers succumbed to the reassurances of reverential staffs and to decisionmaking by consensus, Patton insisted upon the inviolability of individual responsibility and the importance of personal leadership.

Patton was not the only American commander in World War II who exemplified those values. Forty years after the war, however, Patton alone among them retains a strong historical presence. Ironically, the other commanders of that era to whom American soldiers today look as models of the alternative tradition wore the uniform of our enemies—specifically the Germans.

The contrast is a striking one: apart from Patton, the Great Captains of America's World War II forces have little influence among their countrymen seeking instruction in the art of war today. Yet American students of war show an endless fascination for the campaigns and military leaders of the Third Reich. Even today, American soldiers look upon such leaders as von Manstein, Guderian, and Rommel as classic exemplars of the combat commander. The Battle of France, conceived by von Manstein and executed with an awesome skill attributed in large part to Guderian, remains among American soldiers the most admired operation in the annals of modern warfare. In an officer corps that is not notably well-read, familiarity with certain German war memoirs is all but mandatory. A dozen American officers study Rommel's *Attacks* for every one who even picks up Eisenhower's *Crusade in Europe* or MacArthur's *Reminiscences*.

What is the attraction? Judging the *Wehrmacht* strictly in military terms, American soldiers see in it qualities that US forces often lack. The *Wehrmacht*'s operational—as distinct from its strategic—planning showed an uncanny knack for pitting German strength against critical enemy vulnerabilities. Even though the Germans often fought from a position of materiel inferiority, the ability of German commanders to grasp the essentials of combat led early in the war to a string of brilliant victories and later to a seemingly inexhaustible capacity to postpone defeat. Even toward the end of the war, German units did not quit, did not disintegrate, but fought on with startling effectiveness under conditions incomparably more trying than Americans would face in Vietnam.

Of course, just as Patton is not an ideal model for American soldiers in all respects, so too did the leaders of the *Wehrmacht* have their own ineradicable defects. Thus, not surprisingly, American attitudes regarding the *Wehrmacht* have been complex, so much so that respect for German military professionalism has not resulted in wholesale adoption of German methods. The range of those attitudes has combined feelings of inferiority with intense distaste—of frank admiration with self-reproach. It is the old story of the unprepossessing gentleman hopelessly in love with a beautiful woman who is, alas, a whore.

Courtesy USAMHI

There is much to admire in the operational skills of such World War II German commanders as General Heinz Guderian.

Hoping to resolve such anomalies on the most favorable terms, some admirers have struggled to dissociate the *Wehrmacht* from National Socialism. Claims by favored German generals that they were apolitical and innocent of knowledge of war crimes receive easy acceptance. Evidence of Rommel's decency toward defeated foes and of his support for the plot against Hitler is played up to enhance his image as foremost among the "good" generals. However, these efforts have not prevailed before the weight of popular opinion that the *Wehrmacht* shares responsibility for Germany's conduct in World War II. This fact has obliged the American military until recently to keep its professional admiration for the *Wehrmacht* under wraps.

The alternative tradition has a literary side as well, one most often expressing itself through the medium of military journals. Each year, these journals publish a handful of dissenting articles, recognizable by their distinctive formula and their reliance on code words like "warrior" and "values" and "professionalism." "Warriors: An Endangered Species" is a recent example of this genre, of more than routine interest because its anonymous author, "Colonel Yasotay," is a general officer.[1] Yasotay's article takes aim at personnel policies that he believes discriminate against combat arms officers while seducing them into becoming bureaucrats rather than fighters. Yasotay devotes much of his article to railing against a promotion system designed, implemented, and still controlled by "paper shufflers" for their own benefit at the expense of combat leaders and the Army's overall fighting ability. He decries the practice of sending doctors,

lawyers, and dentists to highly competitive tactical schools out of a misplaced concern for equity. Thanks to the dominance of the bureaucratic mentality, complains Yasotay, "we have become an Army of clerks, not killers." To correct the problem, he wants to restore the warrior to his traditional status and to structure personnel policies to favor and advance those who will actually lead soldiers into battle.

In raw form, such views suggest a wistful yearning for a past long since destroyed by the forces of the modern world. Even so, it is wrong simply to dismiss Yasotay as reactionary. Taken as a whole, the written record of the alternative tradition contains much of relevance to the current debate over military reform. Nowhere is this clearer than with the writings of Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall, the journalist and military historian. Marshall's many works take as their common theme what he called the "human factor" in battle. Notwithstanding the military's habitual emphasis on formal organization, doctrine, and hardware, Marshall argues that the outcome of combat seldom turns on any of these. Through his study of innumerable combat actions, Marshall concluded that the keys to victory lay in the quality of an army's leadership and the fighting spirit of its soldiers. His *Men Against Fire*, published in 1947 and still in print, remains the best book by an American about the psychology of battle.[2] The book's chapters reflect Marshall's concerns: "Combat Isolation," "Tactical Cohesion," "The Aggressive Will," and "Why Men Fight." Marshall criticized Americans for paying too little attention to such matters. Throughout the period between World War II and Vietnam, he served as an unofficial conscience of the services, upbraiding them for flirting with doctrinal fads and gimmicky weapons, insisting always upon the primacy of the human element in war. If his influence was seldom decisive, Marshall's status as a critic who was also an insider guaranteed him a hearing and insured that his views would survive the passing of their author.

What is the condition of this alternative tradition today? Does it have any substance beyond cranky literary mutterings and hero-worship for deceased generals of flawed reputation? Can the critique fashioned by the alternative tradition provide a realistic blueprint for change leading to improved military effectiveness?

The evidence suggests that the alternative tradition has acquired new strength in the years since Vietnam. One factor contributing to that strength has been a reassessment of the German military model. So long as attempts to separate the *Wehrmacht* from National Socialism remained exclusively a military undertaking, they lacked the necessary disinterestedness to be persuasive. Recently, however, German and American military performance in World War II has been subjected to impartial

scholarly comparison. Two books have been especially important: *Eisenhower's Lieutenants* by Russell F. Weigley,[3] a well-known historian at Temple University, and *Fighting Power* by Martin van Creveld,[4] a lecturer at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Weigley's massively documented retelling of the campaigns in western Europe from Normandy through V-E Day illustrates in detail the mediocrity of American generalship—Patton being a notable exception—in comparison with the *Wehrmacht*'s high standard of excellence. Neither Weigley nor van Creveld seeks excuses for the *Wehrmacht*'s support of Hitler or its involvement in war crimes. Both clearly show, however, that the *Wehrmacht*'s proficiency in the conduct of combat operations stemmed not from Nazi fanaticism or brutality, but from an unrivaled understanding of war that pervaded all aspects of the German military machine: how it trained units, selected leaders, educated staffs, and so on down to the smallest detail of who got promoted and decorated and how depleted units were reconstituted. While the Americans approached war as if it were a gigantic industrial enterprise like digging the Panama Canal, the Germans subordinated everything to the creation of units with maximum fighting ability. The principles that van Creveld cites as guiding the German effort—the emphasis on intangibles such as unit cohesion, the importance attributed to leadership, the determination to shield combat units from the weight of bureaucratic requirements—echo those that the alternative American tradition has long advocated. Van Creveld's analysis is important not for unearthing anything new but for demonstrating conclusively how the single-minded application of principles *already* known can produce a superior fighting force. By attributing the *Wehrmacht*'s much-respected combat effectiveness to such principles (instead of to Nazism), Weigley and van Creveld invest the principles with increased authority and impart greater legitimacy to the German model.

Some might question how much practical impact a pair of scholarly works is likely to have. That both are already regarded as classics proves little. A proper evaluation of their importance may be possible only in retrospect, years from now. Clearly, however, the two books mark a turning point in military historiography that is of more than scholarly interest. By explaining the limitations of American military performance in terms that soldiers find persuasive and by lending credence to views long held by advocates of the alternative tradition, Weigley and van Creveld provide an intellectual backdrop hitherto lacking in the cause of reform within the military.

Beyond fresh scholarship, there are substantive indicators of the alternative tradition's strength. In the Army especially, recent changes in doctrine and officer education bear the tradition's imprint.

One important example is AirLand Battle, the operational doctrine adopted by the Army in 1982 and refined last year.[5] Outside of the military, AirLand Battle has attracted attention due to the *political* implications of "deep attacks" against enemy "second echelon" forces. Yet, whatever its significance, deep attack is by no means the most important feature of AirLand Battle. From a broad perspective, AirLand Battle is noteworthy because it signifies the abandonment of the evolutionary path that doctrine has followed since World War II. Although the Army is uncomfortable describing it as such, AirLand Battle represents a fundamental departure from the service's usual tactical style. Moreover, the course that AirLand Battle lays out incorporates several elements of the alternative tradition. The language of FM 100-5, *Operations*, the Army's basic how-to-fight manual, reflects this point. The manual downplays the importance of materiel considerations, noting that in deciding the result of any battle, "intangible factors often predominate." Elsewhere, the manual locates the source of "superior combat power" not in weapons or tactics but in "the courage of soldiers, the excellence of their training, and the quality of their leadership." The authors of FM 100-5 are also critical of firepower-attrition, which they view simply as an excessive reliance on materiel manifested in tactics. The manual comes down clearly in favor of tactics emphasizing initiative, flexibility, and decentralized execution. Woven through the text is an image of war as a uniquely complex, dynamic, and unpredictable phenomenon. The authors of the manual shy away from rules and procedures, implying that victory comes not from formulas, but from innovation, imagination, and adaptability summoned in the midst of battle.

In an ideal army, military education contributes to the development of such qualities in soldiers. Here, too, the recent strength of the alternative tradition has had its effect. The Army's new School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) at Fort Leavenworth grew out of dissatisfaction at the inability of existing schools to educate officers in the broader aspects of their profession. Even those Army schools that tried to provide something more than technical training generally failed. SAMS enables selected combat arms graduates of the Command and General Staff College to spend a second year not memorizing the details of how to assemble the defense budget, but studying war itself. The curriculum's seminars, research projects, and extensive readings in history focus on how to win campaigns in the field rather than in the corridors of the Pentagon.

Yet even an enthusiast of the alternative tradition must view these developments as hopeful rather than decisive. To be sure, the AirLand Battle and SAMS show that the alternative tradition is now strong enough not only to criticize the status quo but to affect it. However encouraging that may be, the forces that the alternative tradition aims to dislodge remain firmly entrenched. Even the success of these two experiments is not assured.

Although AirLand Battle has been official doctrine for four years, the process of applying its tenets to what units actually do in the field is still incomplete. Some commanders instinctively oppose any change and continue to base their tactical thinking on that ageless principle: "the way we've always done it." Others embrace AirLand Battle without understanding it. They adopt the appropriate buzzwords, but the *substance* of how their units train or operate remains essentially unaltered. These problems should eventually be overcome, but in the meantime the institutional acceptance of AirLand Battle will remain fragile.

Likewise, as it now exists, SAMS is hardly more than a pilot project. Until the school establishes itself as a permanent part of the landscape of Army education, its survival will depend on the goodwill of a handful of sympathetic generals. For the moment, the existence of SAMS signifies not that reform in military education has triumphed but that the need for reform has been recognized.

Over 30 years ago, the historian T. Harry Williams made a notable attempt to categorize American generals into two distinct traditions: the Macs and the Ikes.[6] The Ike tradition belonged to leaders whose military accomplishments blended with attractive personal qualities to give them nationwide popularity. The general in the Ike tradition "was Mars, but he could also have been Uncle Ned, sitting in the parlor talking to the children." He respected civilian authority, stayed on good terms with the administration in Washington, and scrupulously avoided partisan politics. At the end of his military career, he sought only quiet retirement. If induced to run for office, he did so less because of any ideological axe to grind than in response to a popular clamor that he lead the country. He was the model of the democratic soldier: successful in war, but at root unmilitaristic and fiercely protective of basic national principles.

The general in the Mac tradition lacked the folksiness and common touch to win such popularity. He was distant and aristocratic, even Olympian. "He could never have been Uncle Ned," wrote Williams. "If he had come in the parlor, everybody would have been embarrassed and would have stood up, waiting for him to utter an Important Pronouncement." This type of general considered himself intellectually superior to his civilian masters. He quarrelled with them often and did not hesitate to make these disagreements public. He coveted the Presidency, but despite his brilliance and his victories he never became a serious contender. The people respected him as a gifted soldier, but they did not trust him.

Williams' paradigm concerned itself not with war, but with civil-military relations, in particular the principle of civilian control. In 1952, his perspective possessed a special timeliness. The archetypal Mac still hovered on the fringes of American politics after having been relieved the previous

year for defying his civilian commander-in-chief. At the same time, the namesake of the Ikes was campaigning to *become* commander-in-chief. Williams was telling his countrymen that they were right to be wary of the threat that militarism posed to American democracy. At the same time, he offered reassurance that there also existed soldiers of a more benign character to whom Americans need not hesitate to entrust their democracy.

For Americans in the present day, Williams' formulation has lost its meaning. Today, it is inconceivable that any serving officer would challenge civilian authority as Douglas MacArthur did. It is scarcely more conceivable that any serving officer might run successfully for the presidency. This comparative absence of civil-military contentiousness in the post-Vietnam period has allowed the military debate to focus where it should: on questions of competence and effectiveness. Yet the recent past may yield its own dual tradition of officership, one as pertinent to the questions we face today as the Ikes and Macs were for the 1950s. As prototypes for that tradition we might nominate the Massengales and the Damons.

Courtney Massengale and Sam Damon are the protagonists in Anton Myrer's novel of 20-century military life, *Once An Eagle*.[7] Published in 1968 just as the Army's Vietnam-induced anguish was about to reach its zenith, Myrer's book made up in timeliness what it lacked in literary merit. For many officers, *Once An Eagle* became a handbook on how the Army had gone astray in Southeast Asia.

Courtney Massengale—the very name somehow suggesting a sycophantic careerist—symbolizes the corruption of the officer corps. His style is that of the corporate manager: well-groomed and well-spoken, more at ease in the world of briefings and statistic-laden charts than with weapons and tactics. Massengale is a sophisticate, attuned to trends and to politics, whether inside the military or beyond, and sensitive to the media's power to affect events and people, not least of all himself. In short, his image is that of the quintessential staff officer.

In contrast to Massengale's smooth-talking politician-bureaucrat, Sam Damon is a fighter with mud on his boots. As depicted by Myrer, Damon is something of a rube, but he has integrity, an asset that Massengale sold off to get his first promotion. Damon represents a school of officership that values directness, common sense, and candor. He feels at ease with soldiers and thus prefers duty in the field to service in even the most prestigious staff billet. Absorbed by war, he devotes himself to mastering the skills essential to combat rather than to office politics or public relations. His is the tradition of the warrior and troop leader.

Just as T. Harry Williams' portrayal of the Macs and the Ikes failed to do justice to the complexities of MacArthur and Eisenhower, so too the use of Massengale and Damon as paradigms for the officer corps may

suffer from oversimplification. Like Williams, however, our intent is not to dwell on detail but to highlight a larger truth.

Ignored by the reform movement, forces within the services vie today to determine the evolving identity of the military establishment. Although the Vietnam War exposed to full view the flaws of the Massengale tradition, other factors—not least the very size of the military and the national bias toward bureaucratic management and high technology—keep that tradition alive. Indeed, the fabric of military life has become so deeply imbued with aspects of the Massengale tradition that no officer can escape its influence altogether.

Despite that pervasiveness, the prospects for reform from *within* the military are auspicious. The strength of the Damon tradition is growing. We see its reflection in scholarship, doctrine, and military education. More important, we sense it in the legendary stature of those flesh-and-blood soldiers who embody the qualities of the fictional Damon—men such as Patton, Matthew B. Ridgway, and Creighton W. Abrams. These men—and others less well known, but cast from the same mold—today constitute the preeminent model of professionalism, influencing thousands of younger officers. In the end, that influence may well be the most powerful of all the forces favoring reform.

The final outcome of the struggle between the Massengales and the Damons remains to be seen. This much is certain, however: genuine military effectiveness will improve to the extent that the Damons continue to thrive. Those who support the cause of military reform can best contribute to that goal by encouraging those inside the military whose views they find compatible. Yet in doing so, they should expect to make no more than a marginal contribution. In the end, the American military will reform itself or it will not reform at all.

NOTES

1. "Colonel Yasotay," "Warriors: An Endangered Species," *Armed Forces Journal*, 122 (September 1984), 117, 119.
2. S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978).
3. Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981). See also Trevor N. Dupuy, *A Genius for War: The German Army and General Staff, 1807-1945* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977).
4. Martin L. van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German Military Performance, 1939-1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982).
5. US Department of the Army, *Operations*, Field Manual 100-5 (Washington: GPO, 1982). An updated edition was published in 1986.
6. T. Harry Williams, "The Macs and the Ikes," *American Mercury*, 75 (October 1952), 32-39.
7. Anton Myrer, *Once an Eagle* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).