



STONEWALL JACKSON AND GEORGE S. PATTON

A Survey of Leadership

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“Leadership is the thing that wins battles. I have it, but I’ll be damned if I can define it. It probably consists of knowing what you want to do, and then doing it and getting mad as hell if anyone tries to get in your way.”

— *The Unknown Patton* by Charles Province

Notwithstanding its intangible nature, leadership is often the singular, decisive element in achieving battlefield success. Other factors, including weapons, technology, logistics and industrial capacity, significantly aid an army in overcoming an adversary. Moreover, these environmental necessities are strategic objectives that a nation develops to support its armed forces and are usually beyond the immediate control of a commander. Leadership, however, is the driving mechanism behind the structural factors that a country provides to its commanders and it alone, is the “thing that wins battles,” according to General Patton.

All else being equal among armies, superior leadership will allow one army to defeat another. More importantly, superior leadership can inspire a weaker army to overcome logistical and physical disadvantages and thus defeat a force larger in terms of numbers and equipment. Leadership is the catalyst of the underlying reactions whose ingredients include, but are not limited to manpower, logistics, morale, and technology.

Logically then, the question arises: How can we improve the level of leadership in such a way that we, as an army, maximize our potential as a fighting force? Our

methodology presumes that the best way to prepare the leaders of the future for battle is to study successful leaders in battles of the past.

Utilizing the “trait” approach to leadership theory, certain common, demonstrable qualities will emerge to assist in the understanding of what it takes to become a superior military leader. We shall examine the lives of Stonewall Jackson and George Patton to unravel the common qualities of America’s two finest military tacticians.

These Soldiers shared two common characteristics — strong historical knowledge and the ability to tactically employ mass, which made each man a good general. General Jackson possessed an additional mystical leadership quality, which allowed him to become the finest commander to ever fight on American soil. Similarly, General Patton possessed an inspirational leadership quality, which made him second to only Stonewall Jackson in terms of battlefield success. We shall endeavor to identify those characteristics which each man shared, and we shall describe the specific quality which made each man a superb military leader, but in very different ways.

THOMAS JONATHAN JACKSON – The Beginning of an Enigma

Thomas Jonathan Jackson was born in 1824 in rural Virginia. His formal education was severely limited by the fact that he was orphaned at the age of 6; he was continually shuffled from relative to relative during childhood and largely without the company or support of his siblings. At the age of 17,

Jackson was accepted into West Point where he clearly had a difficult time assimilating with other cadets. Not only was he of humble means and of unusual disposition, his station was not comparable to incoming plebes such as George McClellan, A.P. Hill and James Longstreet.

At West Point, “Old Jack” was most remembered for his indelible perseverance, and paradoxically, for his generosity to others. At the end of his first year at West Point, he stood 70th in French, 45th in math, and 51st in general merit out of class of 72. Three years later, he stood 5th in ethics (his favorite subject), 12th in engineering and 11th in artillery. Whether Jackson was less gifted than other students or was educated in an inferior manner, one cannot determine. More revealing, however, he undeniably demonstrated his indomitable will, his desire to press on, and his fastidious nature by spending inordinate amounts of time preparing his lessons and continually improving his class standing.

GEORGE SMITH PATTON, JR. – A Connoisseur of Military History

George Smith Patton, Jr. was born into a loving, patrician family in Southern California. In the late 19th century, the Patton family moved from Virginia to California where it accumulated significant wealth as cattle farmers and through propitious marital combination. The Patton family enjoyed a long and honorable military heritage, which included Patton’s grandfather, who was buried a Brigadier General, after being mortally wounded at the Battle of Winchester in the Shenandoah

Valley, while commanding the 22nd Virginia Regiment.

One of the senior Patton's closest friends was Colonel John Singleton Mosby, the fabled "grey ghost" of "Jeb" Stuart's mighty cavalry and the namesake of Mosby's Rangers. In the book, *The Unknown Patton*, author Charles Province states that Mosby often visited the Patton's elegant California ranch. "Colonel Mosby would reenact the Civil War with George junior; playing himself, he let George play the part of General Lee as they evoked the battles of the war..."

"Georgie" spent one year at VMI (Virginia Military Institute) in preparation for the five that he spent at West Point where, as the necessity of an additional year indicates, he was an average student. Whether or not his secondary education was the cause of his lack of achievement at West Point is a matter of conjecture. It must be noted that Patton did not enter into formal education until he was 11 years old, and much speculation has occurred regarding this fact to include the widespread theory that Patton was dyslexic. More likely, it appears that Patton's father preferred education via the oral tradition. For example, during his youth, "Georgie" was not taught to read and write. He was entirely read to. In this manner, the senior Patton believed that "Georgie" would naturally develop his true interests.

Patton distinguished himself for bravery in both the Mexican War and World War I. In the Mexican War, he captured and killed the bodyguard of Francisco Pancho Villa in a daring, almost reckless raid, and in World War I he was cited for battlefield bravery.

During the intervening period between the World Wars, Patton studied extraordinary amounts of military history. When Patton died, it is said that he possessed a military library so vast that it rivaled certain military institutions, a well-utilized advantage of being one of the wealthier officers in the Army. Although he was intermittently depressed by the lack of warfare during this time period, Patton published several treatises and articles which summarized his conclusions and ideas regarding war to include commentary on leaders of the past to include Caesar, Napoleon and Stonewall Jackson.

Stonewall Jackson's Maxims

In the book, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War*, author G.F.R. Henderson refers to General Jackson's personal discourse with General Imboden. In one message, Jackson noted that:

"There are two things never to be lost sight of by a military commander: Always mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy, if possible; and when you strike and overcome him, never give up the pursuit as long as your men have strength to follow; for an army routed, if hotly pursued, becomes panic-stricken, and can then be destroyed by half their number. The other rule is, never fight against heavy odds, if by any possible maneuvering you can hurl your own force on only a part, and that the weakest part, of your enemy and crush it. Such tactics will win every time, and a small army may thus destroy a large one in detail, and repeated victory will make it invincible."

These remarks of General Jackson, clearly a reflection of Napoleon's influence upon him, summarize his thoughts of how an army should fight. I will take the liberty of dissecting Jackson's

message to General Imboden into a more simplistic form in order to analyze the specific characteristics that Jackson possessed and utilized in battle. Unlike George Patton, published works by Jackson are rare, and thus, one must infer as to his personal views without the assistance of autobiographical or other sources.

Stonewall's Rule Number One (Valley and Wilderness Campaigns) — Mystify, mislead and surprise.

Jackson's most brilliant and well-known use of this precept occurred when he vanished from the Valley and appeared in the First Wilderness Campaign ready, willing and able to attack McClellan. Unfortunately, McClellan's hubris contributed to his total disregard of the possibility that "Old Jack" could have maneuvered his troops so far so quickly. What allowed Jackson to mislead "Young Napoleon" so thoroughly? Remember that Jackson achieved a lower class rank at West Point than did McClellan, and thus, he was compelled to achieve success by good deed, for he was without predisposition to high command due to station or class standing.

Stonewall's Rule Number Two (Chancellorsville) — Press on.

By mercilessly force-marching his army, Jackson appeared at Hooker's rear without detection, despite reports provided to Hooker by competent staff officers. On that fateful day, Stonewall Jackson devastated Hooker's right flank and rear areas in a classic envelopment movement that caused unprecedented panic and eventual retreat among the Federals. Jackson's superior leadership was the result, in part, of his personal belief that the mission must be accomplished first and foremost, regardless of how hard the men must be pushed.

Stonewall's Rule Number Three (Chancellorsville) — Mass.

In Jackson's final and most brilliant battle, he integrated all three of his time-tested principles in one glorious stroke of military genius. Again at Chancellorsville, Jackson hurled his entire corps in a vast flanking attack. Lee and Jackson agreed to mass Jackson's corps for the purpose of attacking Hooker in detail. In the confusion of battle, Jackson was killed by his own troops while re-entering his lines after infiltrating enemy positions when reconnoitering the federal battle scenario. On the day of his greatest victory, he and his doctrine were initiated into immortality due to a misunderstanding with friendly sentries.

Although the aforementioned summary of Stonewall's maxims does not do a scholar justice, it does concisely represent the substance of his success. Jackson applied these simple principles with logical brilliance and complexity.

Jackson demonstrated these principles in his battles in the Valley, at First and Second Manassas, and in the Wilderness to a lesser extent. His skills with respect to tactical ability were pure because, unlike his opponents he was unable to rely on personal charisma or natural beauty to inspire his troops. Instead, his maxims, his indomitable will, his uncanny ability to evaluate topography and his superior feats of personal concentration on the battlefield allowed him to motivate troops by providing constant success. By also reporting the first victories to the Confederacy, print-media reinforced his successes, and even exaggerated some

of them. Nonetheless, the prime benefit of this exposure was an identity and esprit-de-corps for his troops, something that General Patton would note in his study of history.

Patton's Military Maxims

In a paper titled "The Secret of Victory," Patton lucidly elaborated his philosophy, which at the time (March 26, 1926) was the epic summary of years of intensive military history study. Patton identified three essential elements, which he believed were unequivocally essential for a commander to possess in order to achieve the ultimate result — victory.

Patton's Three Elements for Victory
Inspiration * Knowledge * Force (Mass)

Patton's Rule Number One — Inspiration.

Patton firmly believed that certain lopsided victories of Caesar, Napoleon, and Grant were the primary result of "spiritual" inspiration and motivation, and the secondary result of mental ability. Patton explained that there was a distinction between mental ability and the execution of battle plans. He commented that "Hooker's plan at Chancellorsville was masterly; its execution cost him the battle."

Of course, it may be that the superhuman maneuvering of Jackson defeated his plan, a supposition which Sun Tzu would have agreed with when he observed that: "What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy."

Patton's Rule Number Two — Knowledge.

Patton noted that Napoleon won many battles when outnumbered, but he never lost a battle in which he possessed numerically superior forces. Patton considered Napoleon the epitome of military ability, and as such comprehensively studied his career battles. Patton further postulated that no single element — inspiration, knowledge, or mass — was dominant.

In "Helpful Hints for Hopeful Heroes," he wrote that "any operation, reduced to its primary characteristics, consists of moving down the road until you bump into the enemy... When you have bumped, hold him at the point of contact with fire with



Department of Defense photo

General George S. Patton acknowledges the cheers of the crowd in Los Angeles on June 9, 1945.

about a third of your command. Move the rest in a wide envelopment so you can attack him from his rear flank."

Patton's tactical victories in World War II were characterized by wide flanking maneuvering tactics. His march across France was certainly influenced by the conquests of Caesar in Gaul and Napoleon in Italy. His unrewarded, yet now immortal, relief of the 101st Division at Bastogne was "Stonewallesque" in that he force-marched and pushed foot infantry to inhuman levels.

Patton felt that inspiration was the most important of the three tenets: knowledge and mass being equally less important. He makes an analogy to bread, which unleavened will sustain life, but will be dull tasting; however, when leavened, it is delicious. Personality (inspiration) is the leaven of armies. Let us make the assumption that armies produce men of equal military knowledge. Hence, with equal knowledge existent, inspiration will be the catalyst necessary to win battles, for knowledge alone of how to win battles cannot be fully transmitted unencumbered to subordinates.

Patton's Rule Number Three — Mass.
In the *Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, General

Grant presents similar ideas and discusses their interrelationships. For example, Grant had more success in the campaigns in the west than he did in the east against General Lee, even though his forces were numerically inferior in the west. In the west, however, Grant inspired his troops and utilized his superior knowledge of maneuver to seize Vicksburg and other Confederate strongholds against inferior, if you will, commanders. Conversely, against Robert E. Lee, who possessed, at the very least, equal abilities with respect to inspiration and knowledge, Grant was forced to use mass, the least desirable of the three tenets, to achieve victory. Accordingly, Grant believed that a general should attain victory first by inspiration, second by superior knowledge or military arts, and then by mass/force.

Patton abided by these tenets in their rightful order. In Sicily, he was forced to utilize mass as a last resort because maneuver was not producing desirable results. On the other hand, he inspired his troops and utilized superior knowledge to outmaneuver his opponents in his famous march across France. Patton, like Jackson, only resorted to mass when faced by an equally knowledgeable and inspired commander.

Salient Common Characteristics

Thomas Jonathan Jackson and George Smith Patton Jr., had nothing in common. Jackson was poor and an orphan; Patton was wealthy and well loved. Jackson was shy, quiet, and hypochondriac; Patton was a socialite, athletic at an Olympian level, articulate, and extroverted. Jackson was intensely religious; Patton's religion related to convenience. What was not readily obvious, however, was a common philosophy that was not essentially identical. Both men implemented a brand of inspiration that allowed their troops to maneuver at incredible speeds, and thus were able to shock and surprise the enemy with superior force at weak points at undesirable times. The differences in personality, temperament, and station are unmistakable; the similarities in leadership, single-mindedness, and knowledge are striking.

Based on this analysis, there are two identifiable characteristics that both men possessed which made each, and indeed every commander who possesses them, a good commander:

- * Knowledge of history, and
- * Effective utilization of mass.

Both Generals were devout students of military history and understood the distinction between effective massing of force and unnecessary slaughter. What characteristics propelled each general to greatness? This is where the similarities end and individuality begins. Patton used personal inspiration to motivate his troops, and his battlefield exploits are legendary. His utilization of theatrical motivational techniques provided stimuli to his troops which allowed them to have unparalleled success.

Jackson's mystical qualities made him a demigod among his troops; he was literally worshiped by his men. His philosophy to never inform his subordinates of his upcoming maneuver plans allowed his armies to abruptly surprise the enemy. His introverted nature and religious fervor often confused his peers; his humility, lack of ambition, and strict disciplinary nature made him an enigma. This unpredictability, coupled with his knowledge of military history and use of mass and maneuver, made Stonewall Jackson America's finest tactical general.

Jackson inspired his troops by use of his indomitable will. He forced his troops to push themselves, and by doing so they were successful in their first battle, at First Manassas. Of course, success begets success and by gaining their confidence, Jackson was able to apply superior analytical abilities while pushing his forces to physical exhaustion. Why was he able to do this?

Jackson had proven himself as a leader, and his men unquestionably believed in him. The praise and glory heaped upon them only multiplied the utility of Jackson. He in no way utilized charm or personal charisma to inspire his troops. In another way, by use of mystique, he inspired his troops, and once inspired, he applied his tenets to achieve victory.

George Patton utilized personal inspiration and charisma to motivate his troops. Once inspired and victorious, the troops naturally adjusted and improved to a level where they felt that they were infallible. In addition, Patton was a devout student of military history, which included a study of Jackson. Patton's sister once stated that until George was 15, "Georgie" thought that the steel statues of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson in their house were those of God and Jesus Christ, respectively! How much of

this is hyperbole, we do not know, but it does unquestionably illustrate that Patton had the advantage of studying Stonewall Jackson.

What can be said, though, is that both Jackson and Patton had a definite understanding of how successful wars ought to be fought and those views resulted from studying the great generals of the past. As Napoleon observed:

"Read again and again the campaigns of Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Eugene, and Frederick. Model yourself upon them. This is the only means of becoming a great captain, and of acquiring the secret of the art of war..." (*The Military Maxims of Napoleon*, David G. Chandler)

Who would have won a battle between George Patton and Stonewall Jackson? It is, of course, difficult to hypothesize upon a matter such as this, for neither general truly fought against a commander of equal ability, as did Lee and Grant or Napoleon and Wellington, thus affording such a comparison. By refocusing the question, though, there are other intangible items that this analysis can assist the current Army in understanding.

For example, there is an interesting phenomenon that has manifested throughout modern warfare, and it is particularly endemic in the United States Army: Soldiers who succeed during peacetime, administering the Army, and who, as a result, advance to general officer rank, tend to be unsuccessful in actual combat and are summarily replaced by less well-known officers. Both Thomas Jackson and George Patton achieved little notoriety during their pre-war careers. Although they both fought courageously and gallantly in wars at junior ranks, their careers proceeded slowly before the beginning of the next war.

Based on an analysis of these two immortal figures, it is striking to realize that there are two distinct pathways for one to historically ascertain general officer status in the Army. The first pathway develops during peacetime and requires a specific set of administrative, political and leadership skills. On the other hand, the second pathway develops during combat and requires distinctly different skills, particularly with respect to leadership.

What can one gain from this commentary and analysis? The following tenets should be internalized by every officer in the Army. To become a good, solid commander follow these precepts:

Knowledge – Study the warriors of the past and absorb their maxims. These include Caesar, Napoleon, Jackson, Lee, Grant and Patton, for example.

Mass – Understand the difference in the application and use of superior and inferior forces.

To become "a great captain of warfare" apply this principle:

Single-minded determination – Whether it is personal inspiration or mystical qualities, adapt your personality to items one and two and become a true warrior.

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