Commentary & Reply

Parameters Editors

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"Preemption and Just War"

To the Editor:

I read Chaplain (Colonel) Franklin Eric Wester's article, "Preemption and Just War: Considering the Case of Iraq" (*Parameters*, Winter 2004-05), with much interest. Chaplain Wester's analysis of the Bush Administration's case for war in Iraq in terms of just war theory is well thought-out and well presented, and his conclusions are sound. I take issue, on the other hand, with some of his up-front definitions—in particular, the distinction between "preemptive strike," "preemptive war," and "preventive war," and the examples he elects to include (or not include) of each.

First, the difference between a preemptive strike and a preemptive war seems more quantitative than qualitative, despite the distinction between whether or not the strike occurs in the context of war. Specifically, a preemptive strike appears to be simply of shorter duration. So that, for example, the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear facility was a preemptive strike that occurred outside of war, but is different from the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter only because the latter actually led to war. The idea that the latter "is evaluated [ethically] in the category of jus in bello" appears incongruous considering that it was in fact the spark that ignited the American Civil War rather than an event that occurred within it. The Israeli attack on Iraq might just as easily have provoked a war, which would not have changed the nature of the act itself. Further, if a preemptive strike does indeed provoke a war, does it not then become a preemptive war? Or does preemptive war require that full-scale war was in fact the intention?

Interestingly, the author does not provide an ethical evaluation of either of the examples cited. A cursory look would suggest that neither meets the imminent threat criterion. In the first case, while the attack on Fort Sumter prevented its reprovisioning by the US Navy, it is unlikely that, had it not been attacked, the garrison there would have initiated hostilities against the city of Charleston, given the administration's position on coercion. In the second case, while Iraq was almost certainly desirous of producing nuclear weapons, it did not have any at the time, and hence the Israeli attack clearly stretched the definition of imminence.

The section of Chaplain Wester's article in which preemptive war is defined is interesting in that the author's example of an ethical preemptive war fails to meet the standard—imminent attack—which he accuses the Bush Administration (correctly, in my view) of not meeting. In this case, Wester writes that "with Egypt's tanks on Israel's border in the Sinai as a clear and present danger, Israel launched the 1967 war." He fails to note that: (1) Egypt's tanks were in defensive positions, and entirely unprepared for offensive operations; (2) Egypt had moved

its tanks into the Sinai under the mistaken impression, provide by Soviet leaders, that Israel was going to invade Syria (Egypt's ally); (3) Israel was fully aware that neither Egypt nor its allies were prepared for war, which was why it was able to destroy the Egyptian Air Force on the ground while leaving only 12 jets to guard Israel; and (4) the Israeli cabinet felt compelled to lie to the Israeli people about the origin of the war, giving indication that it was prompted by an Egyptian attack rather than acknowledging that it was preemptive. This clearly does not meet the "imminent threat" requirement.

Chaplain Wester's interpretation of the Six-Day War also blurs the distinction between preemptive and preventive war, although his definition of the latter is much clearer. While it would be difficult to throw the Six-Day War into this category, another of the Arab-Israeli wars would have served nicely as an example. The Israeli invasion of the Sinai in 1956 (in conjunction with British and French forces) was based on the idea that the Egyptian arms buildup (facilitated by arms sales from Czechoslovakia) in the early 1950s would eventually make Egypt strong enough to defeat Israel. As a result, war was considered necessary to deplete Egyptian supplies and convince the Egyptian government that further attacks on Israel would end only in defeat. Of course, the ethical issue here is similar to that in the case of Iraq in 2003—again, a question of imminence.

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To the Editor:

Colonel Franklin Eric Wester rightly focuses on the imminence of the Iraqi threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in his article, "Preemption and Just War: Considering the Case of Iraq." The military threat from WMD was not imminent. The Administration should have known this. By attempting to prove imminence, the Administration failed to make what might have been a valid just war case.

David Kay, former top weapons inspector, attributes the failure to find WMD stockpiles to several causes: Saddam Hussein had deceived the world into believing that he still possessed WMD, even after he had destroyed them; ending United Nations inspections had deprived US intelligence of direct on-the-ground observation; and a mindset had been shaped by Iraq's previous success in concealing its nuclear programs.

If such weapon stockpiles existed, or could be produced in short order, then the threat was imminent. The intelligence community in both the United States and in Europe agreed that WMD programs existed. They incorrectly assumed that the programs had produced stockpiles. Had the programs' status been assessed accurately, the Administration would have been compelled to go to Congress with a different justification for the war. From a tactical point of view, the war might have been fought in the same way—commanders would have assumed the existence of WMD. From a strategic point of view, the war might have been fought with a much stronger assurance of public and diplomatic support.

During the Cold War, the intelligence community learned many lessons in analyzing weapons programs. A military weapons program is complete only after it has accomplished six stages: research and development, prototype, testing, production, fielding, and training. Based on documents published to justify the war, the intelligence community never asked if all six stages were completed. Consider the National Intelligence Estimate's October 2002 report, "Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction"; the United Kingdom Joint Intelligence Committee's September 2002 report, "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government"; and Secretary of State Colin Powell's 3 February 2003 remarks to the United Nations Security Council. These assessments lacked evidence that the Iraqis had completed the testing and training stages. Officials now know that the Iraqi military had conducted minimal live-fire training even with conventional weapons.

Given the Administration's mindset, it is unlikely that intelligence officers could have made the more modest and tentative case that programs existed but had not been completed. Even if they had been looking for evidence of program completion, they would have been required to prove that Iraqi forces were untrained and unready. In a post-9/11 world, this assumption would have been unacceptable as well as unprovable.

There was, however, a stronger case to be made: a possible connection between Iraqi WMD programs and terrorist organizations. The Aum Shinrikyo cult mounted WMD attacks in Tokyo in 1995. Their second assault, the release of a "home-brewed" nerve agent inside a Tokyo subway, killed ten people and injured 50 others. A similar attack in the United States, which spread anthrax through the US postal system, killed five people in October 2001. Terrorist groups do not require an elaborate, six-stage program before they are ready to use weapons of mass destruction. Any number of terrorist groups other than al Qaeda might have been supported by Saddam's incomplete WMD program, making it a threat to America's vital national interests. Any prudent national security planner would have had to assume a nerve gas or biological attack was a real possibility.

The strategic lessons of Vietnam, first enunciated by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger on 28 November 1984, included this criterion: "US troops should not be committed to battle without a 'reasonable assurance' of the support of US public opinion and Congress." The Bush Administration correctly applied this lesson by seeking public and international support as well as the support of Congress. The case was, however, based on an incorrect estimate—one which President Bush challenged as being inadequate, only to be assured by Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet that the case was a "slam dunk."

There were many causes for the failure to find WMD stockpiles in Iraq. As the Administration and Congress address underlying structural issues in the intelligence community, they should remember that no structural reform can correct for a mindset which precludes asking the right questions.

Herbert P. Ely
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The Author Replies:

Let me address each of the correspondents in turn. I appreciate Mr. Bolia's thoughtful analysis and challenges. These examples deserve the careful attention he provides, applying both the classical Just War criteria and elements of emerging ethical categories associated with preemption. Topics to consider include (1) redefining "imminent threat," (2) clarifying how preemption is different from aggression and transcends imperialism, and (3) justifying preemption based on an idealist or visionary posture toward the future. His critique of my examples is well-taken. Frankly, the dearth of examples of preemption in military history, especially convincing examples, underscores part of my argument. Though the 2002 National Security Strategy asserts preemption is a long-standing aspect of the US national repertoire, evidence is meager. Please continue to press for clarity; I welcome the dialogue.

Turning to Mr. Ely's Commentary, US military inspection teams, and before them, David Kay and Hans Blix, all bring us to "20/20 hindsight" about the actual capabilities of Saddam Hussein's regime—they were practically nil. I can't and won't comment about the dynamics and processes inside the Executive Branch which Mr. Ely elaborates. However, we now experience some of the pitfalls of preemption and the burden and opportunity of taking nation-building to a new level. The outcome will test the mettle of our nation and the application and sustainability of the military, political, economic, and informational elements of our power.

Chaplain (Colonel) Franklin Eric Wester, USAR

Competency Modeling in Military Education

To the Editor:

Although we agree with several of the cautions made in the Autumn 2004 *Parameters* article by George Reed, Craig Bullis, Ruth Collins, and Christopher Paparone, "Mapping the Route of Leadership Education: Caution Ahead," a moratorium on competency modeling seems unwarranted. Core competencies can help align parts of an organization to a central purpose. In contemporary operations, organizational core competencies can help leaders prioritize decisions and focus on enduring goals.

The five military services all use competency models. Within the US Army, competencies are an established part of doctrine. The Army operates with two core competencies, as outlined in its *2004 Posture Statement*. Field Manuals (FM) 7-0 and 7-1 require competency-based leader development. Competency models have been developed by various agencies, including the Army War College, and recent work by the US Army Research Institute has led to a new set being considered for an update to FM 22-100.

Some studies report that up to 80 percent of businesses use competency modeling (see Schippmann et al., 2000, for a review of competency modeling practices). The federal government uses competencies, and in just one application the Office of Personnel Management has claimed a savings of $10 million over

traditional approaches to personnel management and development (Rodriguez et al., 2002).

Putting aside for a moment the notion of competency, the expectations of Army leaders must somehow be identified—no matter what label is used for the requirements. Every Army educational institution has some mechanism in place to specify learning objectives and course content. The top complaints from soldiers and leaders have been the duplication in lessons across Army courses and schools, and the material coming later than it was needed to prepare them for their jobs (US Army Combined Arms Center, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003). Having a coordinated set of requirements seems central to improving Army education.

The authors indicated that a detailed competency model could result in education that is contrary to what is needed, but competency models attempt to avoid overspecification. A primary advantage of competency modeling over traditional job analysis is that competency models state requirements in terms of the person rather than the job. Thus, the focus is placed squarely on developing people, which is important for an organization in which all senior leaders are promoted from within. Competencies should not constrain education, but help to clarify desired educational outcomes and other means of development.

The examples (e.g., adaptability, creativity, public speaking) noted in Reed et al. are commonly construed elsewhere to be competencies. Reed et al. stated that these activities need not be identified in a competencies list because the set should be subject to continual change. However, competency models can and should be verified and revised through actual use, regular assessment, and refinements applied to leader development. Even if requirements like adaptability, creativity, and communication are not listed in a competency framework, there still would be some source for instructional content. Additionally, the authors' proposed model of curriculum development is not all that different from competency modeling.

As Reed et al. noted, a good teacher can overcome a poor curriculum. Thus, good teachers will not be constrained by competency lists. For instructors who are less experienced, however, scientifically validated competency models can help provide structure, guidance, and tools for teaching. Starting from a common competency model can elevate instructional quality by helping teachers to develop a consistent approach. Incorporating validated concepts and evidence into instruction should help convey a complete picture of what is required of Army leaders. Instructors operating in good faith can be expected to use educational requirements to improve teaching, not restrict it. In addition to educational benefits, competencies have a wide variety of other uses, such as coordinating leader development across ranks. Competencies also offer benefits for leader assessment, assignment management, and organizational communication.

As scientists we understand that there are valid perspectives other than competencies that can contribute to the identification of leadership requirements. However, one advantage of a scientific approach is that methods and results are documented and can be verified or disconfirmed. It is not clear what alternative method Reed et al. have in mind for identifying leadership requirements. Without some form of a competency list or some type of specification of the performance

domain, it is unclear how the authors are suggesting that leadership will be observed in operational circumstances and developed.

In addition we would like to mention these additional four concerns:

● The lineage of competency mapping is arguably not trait-based. Competency modeling stems, in part, from David McClelland's observation that intelligence tests are insufficient predictors of high job performance. McClelland used criterion-referenced behavioral tests that were not trait-oriented. Although some competency models incorporate traits along with knowledge-skills-abilities, traits are not an essential component of competency models.

● Outsourcing should not be automatically construed as disingenuous. Outsourcing allows additional perspectives and technical expertise to be obtained. It is often fiscally advantageous to purchase services rather than trying to develop an internal capability and fill that organization with the necessary experts. Higher-quality outcomes are frequently obtained through outsourcing.

● Reed et al. expressed a wariness of social science measurement, yet they reported that "the US Army War College conducts a variety of surveys of stakeholders and graduates, and reviews many reports and studies, as part of the curriculum development process." They also recommended field observation, studies, research, and assessment as an alternative to competency modeling. These types of activities are integral components of both the social science paradigm and the more structured approaches to competency modeling.

● Reed et al. reported that "the skills model of leadership has weak predictive value" and credit that observation to Northouse. However, Northouse in the original text does not say that the skills model has weak predictive value. Northouse wrote instead that "the model can be faulted because it does not explain *how* skills lead to effective leadership performance" (p. 51). He does not say that we can't know how those skills contribute to performance, just that the model doesn't provide an explanation. Northouse goes on to say (pp. 62-63):

> There are several strengths in conceptualizing leadership from a skills perspective. First, it is a leader-centered model that stresses the importance of the leader's abilities, and it places learned skills at the center of effective leadership performance. Second, the skills approach describes leadership in such a way that it makes it available to everyone. Skills are competencies that we all can learn to develop and improve upon. Third, the skills approach provides a sophisticated map that explains how effective leadership performance can be achieved. . . . Last, this approach provides a structure for leadership education and development programs that include creative problem solving, conflict resolution, listening, and teamwork.

It is our judgment that leader development should not be an ad hoc process. Establishing a core set of leader requirements is not all that needs to be done, but competency modeling can yield numerous benefits. A competency model can serve as the basis for synchronizing various means of leader development: selection, education, operational experience, self-development, assessment, and feedback. There is no doubt that caution is vital in leader development and

education, but let's not be alarmed about a way ahead that draws on the best that competency approaches and behavioral and social sciences have to offer.

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To the Editor:

"Mapping the Route of Leadership Education: Caution Ahead," by Colonel George Reed et al., is a very timely article on an issue that needs to see the light of day. It is time for someone to exercise leadership and organize us for combat. We manage battlefield operating systems better than we manage the leader development process. As one who has been in the leader development business for two decades, it has been a very frustrating experience. I believe that one of our leadership maxims is that someone needs to be in charge (someone always is). We need to state clearly who that is, and what their responsibilities are. As we attempt to develop a joint and expeditionary mindset, gaining control of the leader development process becomes an even greater imperative.

I felt, as did many others, that the Center for Army Leadership was responsible for managing the leader development process. The center has struggled with this responsibility, but was never resourced to meet the end state, which was never clearly developed or communicated to the Army either. It has always been my studied opinion that the focal point for leader development should reside in the senior service school. I don't mean to diminish the hard work of those engaged in the leader development business, but we desperately need credibility and focus—and credibility is the critical ingredient. We talk about vertical and horizontal integration, but who is managing that integration process? The Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) is the owner, but the leader development process is so disjointed and unfocused that it is amazing we get leaders into the field at all.

Because of the subject's inherent importance, everyone wants a piece of leader development. Unfortunately, too many of them belong to the "well, if it was

good enough for me . . . " model. The system that produced them can't be all bad—a construct that bears at least a grain of truth. Nevertheless, we know that the world is changing at a pace far more dynamic than we can manage. Not only must our system produce leaders (factory model), but, more important, leaders who can operate in a completely different environment. This is not your father's Army.

Sometimes I get the feeling that we want a high level of obfuscation so that no one entity has too much influence in the process. When the concept of the Land Warfare University (LWU) first surfaced a few years ago, I was an enthusiastic supporter. It appeared to be an opportunity to bring leader development under one roof. Unfortunately, the LWU is still resident only in a PowerPoint briefing. Conceptually it was, and still is, the right thing to do. Developing leaders should not be left to whimsy (hope isn't a method). Nor is a rigid systematic approach to leader development the right answer, as the authors eruditely demonstrate. The methodology they present as a process for developing leaders is well within the guidelines of the TRADOC Systems Approach to Training (SAT) model. What has always inhibited or constrained SAT is the connection to the field (the analysis phase). The model outlined by the authors is fully compliant with the SAT process. They add value to the process by providing a blueprint for executing and managing the phases of the SAT process that will produce the quality leaders our nation deserves.

I would suggest that there is a high level of duplication within the TRADOC school system. Why? Because there really isn't a clearing-house for great ideas. Each school is probably doing truly great things, which could work equally as well in another school. But unless I happen to know someone, or attend a meeting or conference, those great ideas will remain at that school. The key piece to the authors' process is the field observation, studies, research, lessons-learned component, which drives the rest of the process. It takes power and credibility to make this piece work, and that is what the Army War College would bring to the game. As a service school, we have a very difficult time obtaining feedback from our "customers." Everyone is surveyed to death, and no one has the time or the inclination to ponder cutting-edge leadership theories in the field. The field says let the schoolhouse do that stuff; but we can't without their feedback and input. Not many schools have the level of expertise and competency resident in the staff and faculty at the Army War College. We have some great folks, with tremendous backgrounds and experiences, but without comparable skills, scholarship, and research talents. Synergistically, all of the schools possess the capacity to add value to the leader development process, given a requisite level of direction. I think we up the ante when we move this process to the joint level. There is no way that we can achieve the level of success that will produce leaders with a joint and expeditionary mindset until someone "owns" the leader development process—and that someone needs to be the Army War College.

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The Authors Reply:

We would like to thank Dr. Fallesen et al. and Sergeant Major Papke for their letters. They reflect exactly the type of discussion and debate we hoped the article would spur. Beginning with the letter by Dr. Fallesen and his colleagues, we are especially pleased that they agree with some of the cautions made in the article. Most of their commentary is a well-considered defense of competency-based approaches. Before addressing that thesis, we are compelled to point out an unfortunate error contained in their letter.

Fallesen et al. contend that we misattributed Northouse when we restated his assertion that the skills model lacks predictive value. In this case they are simply incorrect. Page 51 of *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (3d ed., 2004) states, "Second, related to the first criticism, the skills model is weak in predictive value." It is hard to determine how they could have missed this sentence, since it is an unambiguous statement and part of the very paragraph they cited in their letter.

As to the merits of competency-based approaches, it is true that many, if not most, organizations engage in some examination and depiction of core competencies. Our article acknowledges that there is nothing inherently harmful in identifying core competencies, and we will further grant that there are some benefits to thinking in such terms. In that regard their letter is helpful as a resource for identifying the advantages of such approaches, something we were unable to pursue fully in our article owing to length restrictions. The devil, however, lies in the degree to which such competency lists are relied upon as a driver of the joint education process. It is the detailed crosswalk of extended lists to learning objectives that we strongly caution against. Such matrices do abound in the practice of competency mapping and are clear evidence of an overengineered and mechanistic approach to leader education with all of the attendant ills we identified.

We will grant that there are some contexts where scientific methods can be used to develop a useful list of leader skills and behaviors. Gareth Morgan, in his book *Images of Organizations* (1998) argues that such a machine metaphor "work[s] well under conditions when machines work well. . . : A straightforward task to perform, the environment is stable and predictable, one wishes to produce exactly the same product time and again, precision and efficiency are at a premium, and the human parts are required to be compliant and behave as they have been designed to do" (p. 31). We do not believe these are the conditions under which current military leaders operate. Morgan, in fact, proposes seven other diverse metaphors that add value in understanding organizations and organizational leadership. We caution that a single perspective, largely based on this machine metaphor, should not be the privileged model that guides the development of future military professionals.

In Jay Conger and Douglas Ready's article "Rethinking Leadership Competencies," they acknowledge the central role played by competency-based approaches. They also note that "despite their attractive benefits, competency frameworks have key drawbacks that have been largely overlooked" (p. 41). Our article illuminates some of those drawbacks. We also assert that there are cultural drivers and personality types of key leaders that combine to help explain why. Both the advantages and

the disadvantages should be considered before getting too far down the competency-mapping route. In the days leading to publication of the article, it did not appear to us that the drawbacks were sufficiently considered, and in some cases proponents of competency models for the military appeared quite defensive about their use. We suspected that an overreliance on individuals with significant financial and cultural stakes in these processes played a part in this oversight and response.

Dr. Fallesen and his colleagues defend outsourcing as a means of achieving broader perspectives and higher outcomes, and as being more fiscally advantageous than developing an internal capability. In so doing they identify one of the greatest contemporary ills of our profession. When the senior cadre representing the stewards of our profession must outsource to get high-quality thinking about something as fundamental as our professional boundaries, then we are indeed in trouble. Contractors provide invaluable services, but outsourcing the identification of our core professional competencies and the content of instruction in our professional schools and courses reflects a most lamentable abdication of responsibility by our officer corps. This is something that we simply must not be too busy to attend to.

Sergeant Major Edward Papke (USA Ret.) suggests an appeal to authority and a clearer designation of responsibility as solutions to a "disjointed" and "unfocused" leadership development system. While that approach might result in greater alignment with established goals and directives, we are concerned about the level of centralization inherent in that suggestion. We argue that there is merit to a system that fosters the application of multiple perspectives to such issues. Expertise in these matters does not reside at a single location. In such a system it is advantageous for colleagues to argue the relative merits of various approaches (just as we are doing now in *Parameters*). Integrating these various approaches presents a difficult challenge. Consequently, we argued for investment in the network connecting various players in this process as a means of facilitating such discussions in real time.

Sergeant Major Papke also raises an important point related to the outsourcing argument when he asserts that organizations responsible for managing the leadership development process are under-resourced. We certainly cannot blame those charged with managing our system of leadership development for relying on contractors if they have insufficient time and expertise to devote to the matter. Chronic under-resourcing of organizations such as TRADOC is hardly a new issue. We must preserve as a priority some space for military professionals to engage in this process. We assert that this is a matter of both importance and urgency for the long-term health of our profession.

Colonel George Reed (Ph.D.), Dr. Craig Bullis,
Colonel Ruth Collins (USA Ret.), and Colonel Christopher Paparone (Ph.D.)

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