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Woodward's War: A Lesson in Leadership at the Operational Level

By /par Colonel Randy Brooks

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Abstract

Proven tactical commanders do not necessarily make effective commanders at the operational level. As the concepts of the operational level of war and the operational planning process have evolved so has the need for commanders to have an adaptive, situation-based leadership style at the operational level. Twenty years ago these notions were in their infancy as Britain went to war with Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands. Admiral John “Sandy” Woodward’s steadfast authoritarian leadership style, though at the time traditionally appropriate in a tactical single-service command context, was entirely inappropriate for the command of such a complex joint operation. His leadership style created difficulties in the execution of Operation Corporate. These difficulties created hardships; hardships that were borne on the backs of the individual British servicemen who, in the face of the enemy, with superior will, training and fitness, were called upon again to carry the day.

The Lesson

Proven tactical commanders will make effective commanders at the operational level only if they themselves can be transformed and adapt their leadership style to suit the operational situation at hand.

“If...you happen to agree with the most critical of the commentators, that I am a coward, an incompetent, and arrogant to boot, then so be it. In any case, a leader has to have an element of all those things in him, and I am only trying to give you a glimpse into the mind of the bloke who found himself in charge, in the front line of the war.”

Admiral Sandy Woodward¹

Introduction

Proven tactical commanders do not necessarily make effective commanders at the operational level. As the concepts of the operational level of war and the operational planning process have evolved so has the need for commanders to have an adaptive, situation-based leadership style at the operational level. Agreed, twenty years ago these notions were in their infancy as Britain went to war with Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands but Admiral John “Sandy” Woodward’s steadfast authoritarian leadership style, though at the time traditionally appropriate in a tactical single-service command context, was entirely inappropriate for the command of a complex joint operation.

It is the thesis of this paper that Admiral Woodward’s inability to adapt his leadership style to suit the situation at hand was his greatest failing and it led to significant difficulties in the prosecution of Operation Corporate.

From this particular case, there is an important lesson in leadership to be learned by those who would command at the operational level.

¹ Sandy Woodward, One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1992) xvii.

On Leadership at the Operational Level

Leadership has many definitions. Within the Canadian Forces, leadership is currently defined as “the art of influencing human behaviour so as to accomplish a mission...”² In times of both peace and war, indeed throughout the entire spectrum of conflict, commanders at all levels have the vital roles of effectively leading their people while efficiently managing their time and resources. Nowhere is this more evident than at the operational level of command. Here, leadership is art - management is science - and a commander must be both artist and scientist in the conduct of his duties at the operational level. Dr. Ross Pigeau, Head of the Command Group of the Defence and Civil Institute of Environmental Medicine (DCIEM) supports this concept with his thesis that argues:

$$***Leadership + Management = Commandership***³$$

Here, leadership is a key component of commandership. Dr. Pigeau makes the point that the commander is a complex combination of complementary, and uniquely human, capabilities that allows for “the creative expression of human will necessary to accomplish the mission.”⁴ His leadership talents are the source of common human purpose while his management skills are the source of physical combat power. He is the lens that focuses both on the successful accomplishment of the mission. An effective operational commander is therefore the ultimate combat multiplier.

² CFP 131-002 The Professional Officer (Ottawa: DND, 1973) 2-1.

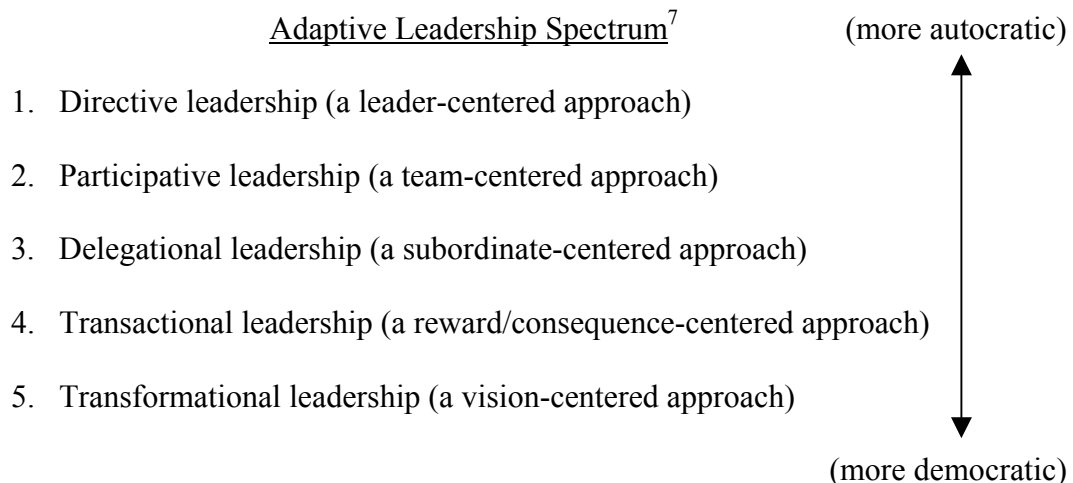
³ Dr. Ross Pigeau, lecturer, “Command”, AMSC3, CFC, Toronto, 26 September 2000.

⁴ Pigeau, “Clarifying the Concepts of Control and Command,” Proceedings of the 1999 Command and Control Research and Technology Symposium (Newport: Naval War College, 29 June - 1 July 1999)

An Adaptive Approach to Leadership

Even though CFP 131-002 The Professional Officer is more than twenty-five years old and badly in need of update, it was current at the time of the Falklands War. Even back then it identified multiple approaches to leadership: the authoritative, the participative and the free-reign approach⁵ and suggested different scenarios where each of these would apply. From this germ of an adaptive leadership model it further stated that “the interrelationship of ‘leader-follower-situation’ is a real and vital fact of life that a leader must recognise. The leader who relies solely upon his personality and refuses...to strive for an awareness of the situational factors is doomed to failure.”⁶

More recently, the US Army field manual, FM 22-100 Leadership, describes an adaptive leadership approach that fits within a spectrum of leadership styles from autocratic on one hand to democratic on the other. It includes situations where each of the following leadership styles is appropriate:



⁵ CFP 131-002 The Professional Officer (Ottawa: DND, 1973) 3-3

⁶ The Professional Officer 6-9

⁷ Adapted from FM 22-100 Leadership (Washington: US Army, 1999) 3-64 to 3-82.
<http://155.217.58.58/cgi-bin/atdl.dll/fm/22-100/ch1.htm#fig1-1>

Simply put, adaptive leadership is leadership tailored to task. The adaptive leader is flexible in seeking to apply the most appropriate style of leadership to the situation at hand so as to focus the collective human will of his force with greatest effect in the efficient accomplishment of the mission.

To be effective, the adaptive leader must be able to provide the right leadership to the right people at the right time under the right conditions - clearly not an easy task, made all the more difficult by the need *not* to become “chameleon-like” and unpredictable in the eyes of subordinates. This approach argues that “using different leadership styles in different situations or elements of different styles in the same situation is not inconsistent. The opposite is true: if you can use only one leadership style, you are inflexible and will have difficulty operating in situations where that style does not fit.”⁸ Admiral Woodward’s style was inflexible and indeed he did have difficulty as shall be shown.

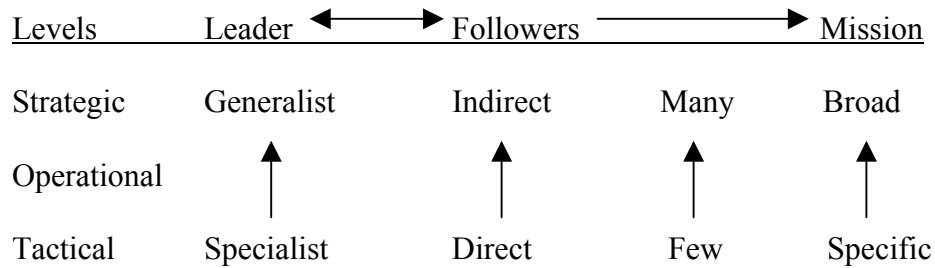
A Situational Leadership Model

The US Air War College (AWC) Situational Leadership Model, as described by Colonel Donald Waddell,⁹ further goes on to describe levels of leadership, peace-crisis-war scenarios as well as joint and combined situations where different styles of leadership are most useful. It is against the following model of situational leadership that Woodward’s leadership style, as an operational commander shall be measured.

⁸ FM 22-100 Leadership 3-68.

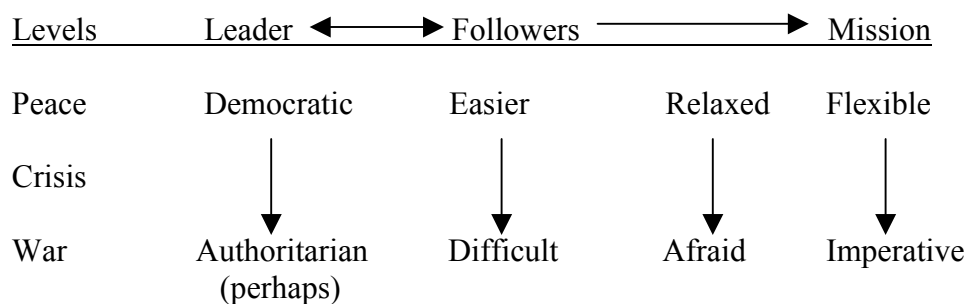
⁹ Donald Waddell A Situational Leadership Model for Military Leaders (Colorado Springs: USAWC, 2000) 4. <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/au-24/au24-259.htm>

Figure 1. Levels of Leadership¹⁰



At the operational level, Waddell describes commanders as needing to be more generalist, having many more followers who are influenced more indirectly in the accomplishment of a much broader mission. Here commanders must become experts in “climate control” and rise above the “lower and more direct leadership levels” lest they become overcontrolling micromanagers.¹¹

Figure 2. The Situation: Peace or War?¹²



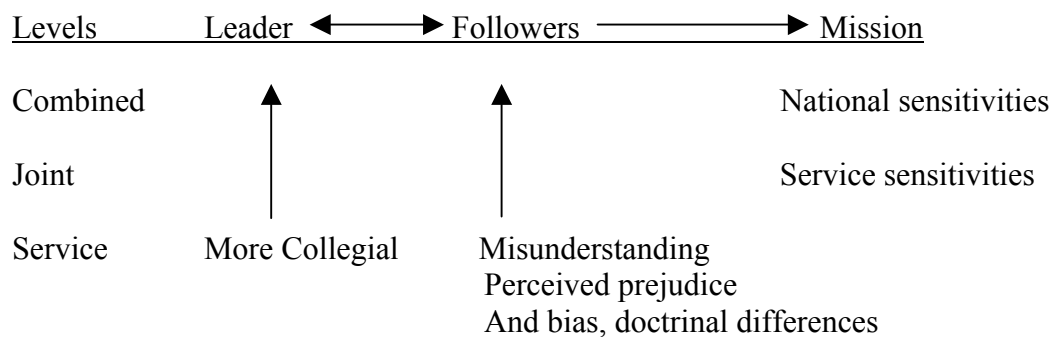
¹⁰ Adapted from Waddell 6.

¹¹ Waddell 6.

¹² Adapted from Waddell 6.

By this model, in times of peace, commanders may be more democratic in their approach because their followers will be more relaxed and easier to lead in the accomplishment of more flexible peacetime missions. In times of war however, Waddell argues that commanders might have to be more authoritarian if troops, out of fear, are more resistant and more difficult to lead in the accomplishment of missions that are much more imperative in nature. He is quick to suggest however, that this should not be an automatic response to a combat environment. This is dependent on the situation and the leader.¹³

Figure 3. Joint and Combined Leadership¹⁴



In joint (and combined) situations, Waddell argues that operational commanders must be more collegial and sensitive to issues of misunderstanding, perceived bias and doctrinal difference. Service and national sensitivities must be catered for to maintain both unity of purpose and effort. Without this, operations will become dis-joint.

Operational commanders lead units and teams, with greater time, space and complexity issues and with much greater possibilities for unintended consequences. At the operational level where actions are much more deliberate, there are staffs, technical experts and subordinate commanders. Operational commanders must be capable of

¹³ Waddell 9.

synergistically harnessing the collective energy of their teams, focusing them on the vision of the end-state, intellectually stimulating their creativity for problem solving and inspiring, cajoling or otherwise driving them on to the accomplishment of the mission. This is a more sophisticated, higher order of leadership than simple authoritarianism.

By the AWC model, proven tactical commanders will make more effective operational leaders if they themselves can be transformed and adapt their leadership style to suit the complex operational situation at hand.

“The Bloke Who Found Himself In Charge”¹⁵

Enter Sandy Woodward. By his own words he was just “the bloke who found himself in charge.” Hardly so, for from the age of thirteen he “found himself” in a dark blue uniform and for thirty-six years thereafter he “found himself” trained in the ways of the Senior Service - more specifically the Silent Service. He excelled as a “Perisher”, on the exceedingly demanding Submarine Commanding Officers Qualifying Course, but he claimed it had “the effect of converting one into a ‘pushy b-----d’.”¹⁶ Indeed, he had acquired just the right character-type to excel as Teacher to the Perishers, the most coveted of posts. He whipped HMS Tireless, Grampus and Warspite into shape, but his particularly straightforward authoritarian leadership style, in keeping with the best of British naval tactical command traditions would prove a problem in a joint operational context. Between War College and staff assignments he commanded his one and only surface vessel, HMS Sheffield, but notably never in an operational context. Ironically, as

¹⁴ Adapted from Waddell 6.

¹⁵ Woodward xvii.

Director of Naval Plans in Whitehall he assisted in the implementation of the crushing 1981 Defence Review which arranged for the sale or withdrawal from service of much of the fleet including both aircraft carriers and marine amphibious landing ships. Luckily these steps were not yet implemented when he in turn was called upon to lead Operation Corporate one year later but tragically, gone was any airborne early warning (AEW) capability whatsoever. Upon promotion to Rear Admiral, 7 July 1981 at the age of forty-nine, Woodward was appointed Flag Officer, Submarines, but in a surprising turn of events this was changed within weeks to Flag Officer, First Flotilla (FOFA),¹⁷ no reason given. Less than ten months later First Flotilla would be at war - with a submariner's firm grip on the helm.

The Falklands War: Dis-joint Operations

At 0300 hours Friday 2 April 1982, while on exercise in the Mediterranean Sea, FOFA received orders to “consolidate his task group” and “prepare covertly to go south.”¹⁸ Argentina had invaded the Falkland Islands and First Flotilla was to be the nucleus of Task Group South that would marry-up with ships steaming from Britain and proceed “with all dispatch” to the South Atlantic. For the sake of brevity, the historical sequence of events has been reduced to the chronology found at Appendix 1.

The Falklands War is described by Max Hastings as “a freak of history, almost certainly the last colonial war that Britain will ever fight...an event...that somehow

¹⁶ Woodward 42.

¹⁷ FOFA and FOF1 are two acronyms used interchangeably throughout the various sources. FOFA is used by Woodward himself and is the term of choice in this paper.

escaped from a television screen in the living room.”¹⁹ It was extraordinary in other ways too. Britain was caught by surprise and had no contingency plan available and was forced to “cobble together,” in very short order, a task force to go to war, as Major-General Jeremy Moore, the Land Component Commander (LCC) writes,

at the end of a seven and a half thousand mile long logistic pipeline, outside the NATO area, with virtually none of the shore-based air we normally counted on, against an enemy of which we knew little, in a part of the world for which we had no specific plan or concept of operation.²⁰

Time was both friend and foe. Friend because if Argentina had not invaded until the following year the Fleet would have been bereft of all carrier and amphibious landing capabilities due to the implementation of the 1981 Defence Review. It is conceivable that the Falklands would still have been the Malvinas today. Foe because there were perhaps one hundred days remaining until the Antarctic winter forced an operational pause.

Admiral John Fieldhouse, CinC Fleet, headquartered in Northwood, England was in overall command, with Rear Admiral Sandy Woodward as the on-site commander of Task Force South with subordinate commanders for air, land, amphibious and submarine forces. His campaign plan for Operation Corporate was designed in four phases:

1. Establishment of a sea blockade around the Falklands;
2. Repossession of South Georgia;
3. Gaining of sea control and air supremacy around the Falklands; and
4. Eventual repossession of the Falklands.²¹

¹⁸ Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins The Battle for the Falklands (London: Michael Joseph, 1983) 71.

¹⁹ Hastings and Jenkins vii.

It is a truism that no plan survives first contact and this plan was indeed no different. The fog and friction of war, both from a hostile enemy and a hostile environment increased with each passing day. Whereas Woodward was able to achieve phases one and two with increasing difficulty, phase three proved not to be possible. Without an airborne early warning (AEW) capability or land-based air support (CAP and CAS) air superiority could not be achieved by the limited number of carrier-based Harriers available. Only toward the end of the operation did air parity exist and this only due to grinding attrition. Although *de facto* sea control was achieved after the sinking of the Belgrano, the task force had no way of knowing this for sure without AEW and remained configured for the surface threat throughout the operation. The subsurface threat was ever-present and Woodward's constant worry and although much ASW ordinance was expended, no confirmation has ever been forthcoming that patrolling Argentine submarines were every actually engaged by the Fleet at sea.

Though initially planned as a maritime operation throughout, as the massive Argentine build-up of forces continued on land, it became readily apparent that a decisive land component force of divisional size would be necessary to successfully conduct phase four. Once Major-General Jeremy Moore, the Land Component Commander (LCC), was ashore, transfer of authority from Woodward to Moore effectively cast Woodward in a supporting role. Phase four was not to be his fight.

In the end, it was a race against time. On land, logistics support was overstretched and many soldiers were down to their last magazine of ammunition. At sea, the Fleet was being ground down by the elements and when the surrender finally did

²⁰ Richard Dunn Operation Corporate: Operational Artist's View of the Falkland Islands Conflict (Newport: Naval War College, 1993) 10.

come, on the night of 15 June, the first Antarctic blizzard placed all human life, friend and foe alike, in peril.

The balance sheet of losses²² tells the ultimate tale:

	<u>Argentina</u>	<u>Great Britain</u>
Ships	5	7
Aircraft	105	34
Personnel Killed	1,798	256
Wounded	~ 1,000	674
PWs	11,900	1

Woodward's War: Leadership Successes and Failures

Woodward's physical war, the war for the return of the Falkland Islands to British sovereignty, was fought and won in just one hundred days but, as shown, not without great cost. Woodward's moral war, fought for the hearts and minds of his own subordinates, was perhaps a greater personal test, a test of his own leadership ability as an operational commander in battle.

Sandy Woodward was first and foremost a submariner, one of the best - and he knew it. His skills were honed while he was in command of three boats but perhaps the best indication of his abilities is recalled upon his taking command of HMS Warspite, the

²¹ Dunn 12.

²² Lynn Kehrli et al Guide for Case Study: The Falklands Conflict - 1982 (Maxwell AFB: USAF AWC, 1982) xvi-xvii.

largest and newest of the British nuclear attack submarines (SSNs). Having two previous commands under his belt and having been Teacher to the Perishers, he was regarded as the most experienced submarine commander in the Service. He decided to “throw the boat about” to see what it could do and having unnerved the crew, continued the exercise, called “Angles and Dangles”²³ for an entire week, demanding major high-speed manoeuvres unexpectedly at any hour of the day or night while timing it all with a stopwatch. Those among the crew who could not handle the stress left the Service, those who remained formed the crew of a boat from which legends were made and Woodward was their commander. An authoritarian taskmaster, he barked orders to his crew and they willingly responded for they knew he was the secret to their survival. These times when he was in direct control were times of “incident and excitement”²⁴ and he lived for them. His self-confidence soared.

Conversely, he speaks of his times as a staff officer or as a student at War College as times when “I was terribly unused to being argued with...even to being interrupted.”²⁵ He exclaimed, “This is not what I joined the Navy for!” but his wife Char tried unsuccessfully to set him straight by arguing that “a few good months of humility would be good for the soul, for he had become far too pleased with himself.”²⁶ When it came time for him to leave the College his final report only superficially hid the concern about his demeanour by describing him as possessed of a “...very great strength of character.”²⁷ On this he stood fast and on this he made no apologies.

²³ Woodward 48-49.

²⁴ Woodward 50.

²⁵ Woodward 50.

²⁶ Woodward 50.

²⁷ Woodward 50.

In his ten months as FOFA he continued his habit of “throwing the boat about” to see what the First Flotilla could do. It is his own diary that reveals his mood:

Another day, another place, in April '82. I have been FOFA for ten months and I'm bored with it...I hate it all...I'd rather have some real action.²⁸

There is plenty of evidence to show that he did not adapt his leadership style to suit the operational situation. Indeed it is a member of his own naval staff who, in describing Woodward's style, is quoted as saying:

Thoughtful naval officers concede that staffwork has never been one of their service's greatest strengths. The autocratic command structure that is necessary in a warship at sea mitigates against the military approach, which is for the commander to offer to his staff great flexibility in presenting a range of alternatives for achieving an objective. A naval staff is more accustomed to being arbitrarily informed by its commander, 'This is what I want to do. Arrange to do it.'²⁹

Admirably, Woodward visited each ship and spoke in each wardroom and messhall. He was frank but confident about the coming engagement. In retrospect, his confidence may have been seen as arrogance to some for in underplaying the enemy's capabilities, “Woodward's Walkover” as it was reported in the British press would come back to haunt him when the killing started. An officer is reported as saying, “Our chaps could read their Jane's Fighting Ships as well as he could and they didn't like being treated as idiots.”³⁰

At the first joint planning session, 16 April aboard HMS Fearless, where Admiral Woodward met with the Commander Marine Amphibious Warfare (COMMAW),

²⁸ Woodward 74.

²⁹ Hastings and Jenkins 120.

³⁰ Hastings and Jenkins 119-120.

Commodore Michael Clapp and the Commander of 3 Commando Brigade, Brigadier Julian Thompson and his “R Group,”³¹ things did not go well from the start. “He made us feel like a bunch of small boys under the scrutiny of the headmaster”³² declared one officer and when asked about the air threat by the Intelligence Officer, Woodward dismissed him by saying, “I don’t think we need bother about all that.”³³ To a well-known Royal Marine expert and long time resident of the Falklands, Major Ewen Southby-Tailyour, he introduced himself by saying, “And what do you know about the Falklands, boy?”³⁴ All in all, not the right tone to set for an important first joint planning session. Worse, he would not listen to courses of action proposed by the assembled staffs but rather stated *his* preferences and left, confident that all was well and that the staffs would work out all the details as he directed.

Alarmed by this state of affairs and put off by Woodward’s arrogant and authoritarian manner, Thompson would have no further dealings with Woodward directly and it was left to the staffs to arrange liaison officers to “play the important role of keeping ‘combined operations’ combined [sic - ‘joint operations’ joint].”³⁵ This open seam between operations afloat and operations ashore would have serious logistical consequences in mounting the final phase of the operation and the troops would suffer greatly for it. Dr David Schrady, Distinguished Professor at the Department of Operations Research at the US Naval Postgraduate School is critical of Woodward’s leadership and notes that “in his book written ten years later, the Falklands battle group commander, RADM Woodward, wrote 351 pages without ever using the word

³¹ Reconnaissance Group: composed of his planning staff and subordinate commanders.

³² Hastings and Jenkins 121.

³³ Hastings and Jenkins 121.

³⁴ Hastings and Jenkins 121.

logistics.”³⁶ Logistics enable operations. An adaptive operational leader is inclusive and works with the staff, challenging them to use their logistical expertise to surmount obstacles placed before them by the enemy, to close the seams between components and operate together in synchrony. To do otherwise is to imperil the troops and their mission.

In comparing memoirs, Woodward clearly sees himself as the Commander Joint Task Force but Thompson refers to him only as the Maritime Component Commander.³⁷ This startling and very public command crisis was to some extent ameliorated by the arrival from Northwood of CinC Fleet, Admiral Fieldhouse who, in addressing the assembled commanders and their staffs left them “vastly reassured.”³⁸ How so? The leadership styles of Woodward and Fieldhouse are an interesting and relevant study in contrasts. In comparison with Woodward’s off-putting and divisive style, Fieldhouse did not *exude* the same aggressive self-confidence, he *developed it* in the minds of all those assembled with an impressive display of *vision*. He spoke of what must be achieved, the desired *end-state*, but not of how, for that would be up to them, the experts. Finally, he *listened* to subordinate commander’s concerns for they would have to come together as a joint team to accomplish the mission.³⁹ Vision, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualised concern; all the key aspects of a transformational leadership⁴⁰ style were employed whether he knew it or not. The result is that he was accepted by many as the real operational commander, albeit 8000 miles away. In the

³⁵ Hastings and Jenkins 119.

³⁶ Dr. David Schrady Sea-based Logistics and Lessons from the Falklands (Monterey: IJWA Naval Postgraduate School) 20.

³⁷ Julian Thompson No Picnic (London: Leo Cooper, 1985)

³⁸ Hastings and Jenkins 122.

³⁹ Hastings and Jenkins 122.

eyes of the Royal Marines “it would be Fieldhouse, in Northwood...and not Woodward, in Hermes” who would be in charge of the operation and “Woodward would be responsible for the conduct of naval operations”⁴¹ only.

In applying the AWC leadership model to this specific scenario, if Admiral Woodward had been situationally adaptive and had he employed a more collegial, accommodating leadership style in this joint operational context, one that focused human capabilities as opposed to dividing them, then a single joint operational team would have been working from a common operating picture. There would have been cooperation between all component commanders and their staffs and the seams between operations afloat and operations ashore would have been carefully attended to. As it was, he did not and operations were decidedly dis-joint.

Adaptive Situational Leadership: The Key to Becoming an Effective Commander at the Operational Level

The three levels of leadership: tactical, operational and strategic are each in their own ways unique. They differ fundamentally with respect to audience, purpose, message and complexity. Appropriate leadership styles that best fit the level of command need to be employed by leaders who are flexible and can naturally adapt their leadership behaviour to the situation at hand.

Generally speaking, it's at the tactical level where military leaders initially start to command. Here, the demands of command are unique. The audience (or group) is

⁴⁰ Stephen Zaccaro Models and Theories of Executive Leadership: A Conceptual/Empirical Review and Integration (Washington: US Army RIBSS, 1996) 316.

usually smaller and most often can be dealt with face to face. The purpose is normally focused on the accomplishment of some direct action. The message is unambiguous and usually, because time is short, delivered verbally in the form of orders or instructions. The problem is simple and the consequences both intended and unintended, though they may be dire, are known, few in number and comparatively easy to mitigate. At this level, using the US Army model, when time is of the essence, stress or danger is high and especially under combat conditions a directive, leader-centered approach to leadership may perhaps be necessary and indeed may be expected by subordinates who entrust their leaders with their lives.

If however the situation should change, if time is not a factor, if stress and danger are minimal, or if personnel under command are in training then a different strategy may be entirely appropriate. A less directive, more participative approach may be called for. Competition and reward can be used to motivate teambuilding and drive them to a higher level of collective capability and esprit-de-corps.

As members of the tactical team become more and more experienced, opportunities for a more delegational leadership style may emerge. If the group is highly motivated and competent and the task is clearly defined, best results may be gained by “delegating and disappearing.” If the group is highly motivated and competent but the task is demanding then by providing them with a clear vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualised concern they are given powerful motivational tools to overcome obstacles and be transformed to a higher level of capability. Finally, taking those with low motivation through complex and perhaps dangerous situations is the greatest test of all and will undoubtedly require aspects of all leadership styles. Over

time, the tactical leader's competence and confidence will develop. By experiencing a wide variety of situations that demand an adaptive, situation-based leadership strategy, a proven tactical commander develops. But this is not an end-state in itself, rather it is merely step one in a lengthy leadership development process.

At the next level of command, at the operational level, the audience becomes more diverse, more experienced and normally consists of highly self-motivated team players. The purpose is less action-oriented and more behaviour-oriented. The message is verbal, written and electronic. The complexity of the situation is manifestly greater with a potential for unintended consequences of catastrophic proportions. At the operational level where time scales are not normally so immediate, actions can be more deliberate. There are staffs, planning groups and technical experts to assist in the operational planning process and subordinate commanders to support the conduct of operations. The commander must be capable of synergistically harnessing the collective energy of a joint (and combined) operational team effort, focusing them on his vision of the end-state, intellectually stimulating their creativity for problem solving and inspiring them on to the accomplishment of the mission. This is transformational leadership in action at the operational level. However, this is not to say that transformational leadership is the be-all and end-all of leadership at the operational level, indeed there will be times when the operational commander must be directive in forcing issues to resolution. Rather, he must be fully capable of employing the entire spectrum of leadership approaches, each at the right time, to suit the situation at hand. It is with this level of leadership capability that the effective operational commander becomes the ultimate combat multiplier.

In Conclusion: A Lesson in Leadership at the Operational Level of War

“If, after reading...you happen to agree with the most critical of the commentators, that I am a coward, an incompetent, and arrogant to boot, then so be it. In any case, a leader has to have an element of all those things in him, and I am only trying to give you a glimpse into the mind of the bloke who found himself in charge, in the front line of the war.”

Admiral Sandy Woodward⁴²

As the operational commander of the British joint task force that fought to reclaim the Falkland Islands as sovereign British territory in those one hundred days in 1982, Admiral John “Sandy” Woodward was neither a coward nor an incompetent. His leadership style, seen as arrogance by some, was the product of a long and rich heritage of British naval tradition and training. In the final analysis - he won - and in the end, that is all that really matters. But times change and there are leadership lessons to be learned, lesson that, if heeded, need not result in mistakes revisited. Leadership it is said “starts with a vision of the future...The vision becomes a commitment, a drive, and a focus of all energy.”⁴³ It is a commander’s responsibility to communicate that vision, empower others and provide them the resources needed to accomplish the mission.

Today, at the operational level, at a quantum level of sophistication beyond the tactical, the effective operational commander needs to cultivate an equally sophisticated

⁴² Woodward xvii.

⁴³ Taylor and Rosenbach 1.

array of personal leadership capabilities based on an adaptive, situational leadership model as was described herein.

Adaptive leadership is leadership tailored to task. The adaptive leader is flexible in seeking to apply the most appropriate style of leadership to the situation at hand so as to focus the collective human will of his force with greatest effect in the efficient accomplishment of the mission. An effective operational commander is the ultimate combat multiplier.

It has been shown that proven tactical commanders do not necessarily make effective commanders at the operational level. As the concepts of the operational level of war and the operational planning process have evolved so has the need for commanders to have an adaptive, situational leadership style at the operational level. Twenty years ago these notions were in their infancy as Britain went to war with Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands. Admiral Sandy Woodward's simple, straightforward, authoritarian leadership style, though at the time traditionally appropriate in a tactical single-service command context, was entirely inappropriate for the command of a complex joint operation. His leadership style created difficulties in the execution of Operation Corporate. These difficulties created hardships; hardships that were ultimately borne on the backs of individual British servicemen who, in the face of the enemy, with superior will, training and fitness, were called upon again to carry the day.

From this particular case, there is an important lesson in leadership to be learned by those who would command at the operational level...

..The Lesson:

Proven tactical commanders will make effective commanders at the operational level only if they themselves can be transformed and adapt their leadership style to suit the operational situation at hand.

Chronology⁴⁴

- 2 Apr Argentina invades the Falkland Islands.
- 3 Apr Argentina invades South Georgia; UN passes SCR 502; first RAF transport aircraft deploy to Ascension Island.
- 5 Apr First task force ships sail from the UK.
- 12 Apr 200 mile Maritime Exclusion Zone comes into effect.
- 23 Apr The UK Government warns Argentina that any approach by Argentine warships or military aircraft which could amount to a threat to the task force would be dealt with appropriately.
- 25 Apr British Forces recapture South Georgia; submarine Santa Fe attacked and disabled.
- 30 Apr Total Exclusion Zone comes into effect.
- 1 May First attack on Falklands by Vulcan, Sea Harriers and warships; first Argentine aircraft shot down.
- 2 May General Belgrano sunk by HMS Conqueror.
- 4 May HMS Sheffield hit by Exocet missile; later sinks.
- 7 May The UK Government warns Argentina that any Argentine warships and military aircraft over 12 miles from the Argentine coast would be regarded as hostile and liable to be dealt with accordingly.
- 9 May Two Sea Harriers sink trawler, Narwal, which has been shadowing task force.

11 May HMS Alacrity sinks stores ship Cabo de los Estados in Falkland Sound.

14/15 May Special Forces night raid on Pebble Island; 11 Argentine aircraft destroyed on the ground.

21 May 3 Cdo Bde establish beach-head at San Carlos; HMS Ardent lost; some 15 Argentine aircraft destroyed.

23 May HMS Antelope crippled (sinks on 24 May); 10 Argentine aircraft destroyed.

24 May 18 Argentine aircraft destroyed; some damage to ships.

25 May HMS Coventry lost and Atlantic Conveyor hit by Exocet (sinks 28 May); 8 Argentine aircraft destroyed.

28 May 2 Para recapture Darwin and Goose Green.

30 May 45 Cdo secure Douglas settlement; 3 Para recapture Teal Inlet; 42 Cdo advance on Mount Kent and Mount Challenger.

1 Jun 5 Bde land at San Carlos.

8 Jun RFAs Sir Galahad and Sir Tristram hit at Fitzroy; 10 Argentine aircraft destroyed.

11/12 Jun Mount Harriet, Two Sisters and Mount Longdon secured; HMS Glamorgan hit by shore-based Exocet - damaged but seaworthy.

13/14 Jun Tumbledown Mountain, Wireless Ridge and Mount William secured; General Menendez surrenders.

25 Jun Mr Hunt, Civil Commissioner, returns to Port Stanley.

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