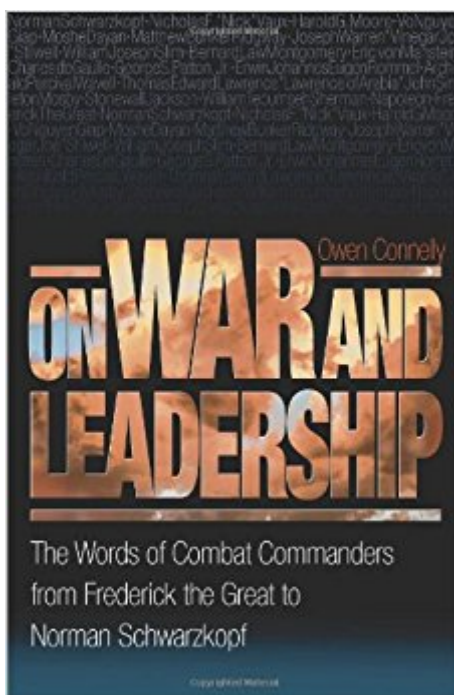


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On War And Leadership: The Words Of Combat Commanders From Frederick The Great To Norman Schwarzkopf



Synopsis

What can we learn about leadership and the experience of war from the best combat leaders the world has ever known? This book takes us behind the scenes and to the front lines of the major wars of the past 250 years through the words of twenty combat commanders. What they have to say--which is remarkably similar across generational, national, and ideological divides--is a fascinating take on military history by those who lived it. It is also worthwhile reading for anyone, from any walk of life, who makes executive decisions. The leaders showcased here range from Frederick the Great to Norman Schwarzkopf. They include such diverse figures as Napoleon Bonaparte, commanders on both sides of the Civil War (William Tecumseh Sherman and Stonewall Jackson), German and American World War II generals (Rommel and Patton), a veteran of the Arab-Israeli wars (Moshe Dayan), and leaders from both sides of the Vietnam War (Vo Nguyen Giap and Harold Moore). What they have had in common is an unrivaled understanding of the art of command and a willingness to lead from the front. All earned the respect and loyalty of those they led--and moved them to risk death. The practices of these commanders apply to any leadership situation, whether military, business, political, athletic, or other. Their words reveal techniques for anticipating the competition, leading through example, taking care of the "troops," staying informed, turning bad luck to advantage, improvising, and making bold decisions. Leader after leader emphasizes the importance of up-front "muddy boots" leadership and reveals what it takes to persevere and win. Identifying a pattern of proven leadership, this book will benefit anyone who aspires to lead a country, a squadron, a company, or a basketball team. It is a unique distillation of two and a half centuries of military wisdom.

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Customer Reviews

"A superb and thought-provoking primer from masters of the art of command on the timeless elements of leadership that can be followed to help overcome any adversity."--Military Heritage

"This book has a rich compilation of leadership traits, characteristics, and principles that some of the great battle captains of the past have adhered to. It provides an exceptional reference for

comparison for officers toady."--Major General Harry W. Jenkins, Marine Corps Gazette "Owen

Connelly has done us a favor by scouring the writings of the world's foremost warrior-leaders and presenting their thoughts in one well-connected volume."--John S. Chilstrom, Air Power History

"This is an excellent book. . . . This is a book that is a pleasure to read, not simply dip into. It is an excellent choice for anyone interested in command and leadership of troops. It also would be a

useful addition to any military history course covering the past two centuries."--Ronald L. Spiller, Journal of Military History

"The man makes the book. The man is Owen Connelly, a serious student of war and an experienced soldier-leader. His book On War and Leadership will serve for many years as a valuable reference for scholars and a vital source of inspiration and instruction for practitioners. It is a real gem."--Harold R. Winton, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell Air Force Base

"Owen Connelly, who combines front-line military experience with a long and distinguished academic career as a scholar of the Napoleonic Wars, is well qualified to edit an anthology on this surprisingly neglected subject. Having this material in one place is itself a significant contribution to scholarship."--Dennis Showalter, author of History in Dispute and The Wars of Frederick the Great

"Owen Connelly is a thoughtful and interesting scholar. Here he offers the reflections of combat leaders, allowing executives to compare their management and leadership ideas with those of military masters. It can be recommended to a popular audience."--Jeremy Black, author of War and the Worlds and Why Wars Happen

This is merely a book of cut and pastes from speeches, bio's, autobiographies. From that, it is a disappointment, but the title does state that that is what it is about. On the plus side, there are chapters of leaders that generally does not have a chance to read about. Common theme of leadership: look out for your subordinates best interest, maintain communication, live and act in the

way that you preach and some other themes."

This is nothing more than a compilation of writings from various generals. Selection criteria is "having written something on military campaigns", more than relevance of the authors. The only things Connelly adds are a short introduction and sketchy biographical notes on the generals. His introduction does not add any framework to study war leadership, other than "leading from the front". The bio notes are at wikipedia level, without any added value, or occasionally misleading (e.g., Rommel, Montgomery, Manstein). I bought the book second hand for 0.01 \$ and it does not worth more.

A scholar with a military background, Connelly begins with an excellent thumbnail sketch of the changing nature of Western warfare over the past 250 years. This sets up the bulk of the book, which is selected words of 20, primarily European and American, military leaders from the same period. Each receives a separate chapter (except for Frederick the Great and Napoleon, who are combined), and each chapter starts with a short background on the leader. These are what Connelly refers to as "muddy boots" leaders, and each was successful in so far as his combat operations were concerned. He also concludes each chapter with an explanation of the importance to the field of leadership of that individual's ideas and methods. Thus, he provides a brief, but adequate rationale for each leader included in the book. His inclusion of T.E. Lawrence (Great Britain, World War I), Erich von Manstein (Germany, World War II) and Vo Nguyen Giap (Vietnam, French Indo China War and the War in Vietnam) were particularly excellent choices. The others were certainly apropos to Connelly's purpose, except for Charles de Gaulle. The rationale for including him escapes me. The other leaders Connelly included are:

- o William Tecumseh Sherman (Union, American Civil War)
- o Thomas Jonathan "Sonewall" Jackson (Confederacy, American Civil War)
- o John Singleton Mosby (Confederacy, American Civil War)
- o Archibald Percival Wavell (Great Britain, World War II)
- o Erwin Johannes Eugen Rommel (Germany, World War II)
- o George S. Patton, Jr. (US, World War II)
- o Bernard Law Montgomery (Great Britain, World War II)
- o William Joseph Slim (Great Britain, World War II)
- o Joseph Warren "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell (American, World War II)
- o Matthew Bunker Ridgway (US, World War II and Korea)
- o Moshe Dayan (Israeli War for Independence)
- o Harold G. Moore (LZ X-Ray, Ia Drang Valley, Vietnam)
- o Nicholas F. "Nick" Vaux (Great Britain, Falklands War)
- o H. Norman "Stormin' Norman" Schwartzkopf (US, Persian Gulf War)

As you can see, he included small unit leaders (Mosby, Lawrence, Moore, and Vaux) rather than keying on just major commanders. This provides a nice blend to the discussion and

demonstrates that good leadership traits are much the same at all levels of command. He might have commented on why some obvious choices were NOT included such as Zachary Taylor (US, War with Mexico), James Longstreet (Confederacy, American Civil War); or, for small unit actions (which may be more apropos today) Joshua Chamberlain (Union, American Civil War), Teddy Roosevelt (US, Spanish-American War), John Howard (Great Britain, Pegasus Bridge, Normandy, World War II), John Frost (Great Britain, Arnhem, World War II), William Orlando Darby (US, Rangers, World War II), or Robert Frederick (US, 1st Special Service Force, World War II). Each of these men exercised great leadership ability and skill in training and preparation for combat and later in desperate fighting. It might also be instructional to have provided a contrast with a few leaders of lesser caliber. Connelly actually penned relatively little of the book. Rather, as the title implies, most is taken from the words of the leaders themselves (memoirs, letters, diaries) or from those close to them. His contribution is the choice of the leaders, choice of "their" material, and his set-ups and conclusions. Sometimes he uses whole blocks of material without explaining why the particular passage is important. The chapters are quite interesting reading on their own (especially the chapters on T.E. Lawrence and Harold Moore), and one can certainly draw conclusions about leadership, but I would have struggled to get full measure from them had I not read his final, Conclusions chapter first. One point that isn't crystal clear is that leadership is a learned art. There are natural leaders (charisma, for example, helps), but most successful leaders are students of leadership. Moreover, the more you read about leadership, the more spins and nuances you see. Much of what is written is just that: spin with an eye to selling a new book. But in its essence, leadership is rather straightforward. It's the implementation -- the practice of good leadership techniques -- that's the difficult part. That's the key attribute in Cohen's book -- his summary in the Conclusion's chapter depicting the key traits of good leaders, supported by the descriptions of how each applied some or all of these traits. In his summary they are:

- o Lead in person
- o Lead from the front
- o Improvise according to the situation
- o Hold to unity of command
- o Take care of the troops
- o Take risks (calculatedly, not recklessly)
- o Prefer the offensive
- o Know the value of winning.

I don't take exception to this list, but I would add that these must be against a backdrop of a sound set of positive personal values, first among which is integrity. On balance, Cohen's book is a useful addition to one's library or reading list, whether you are military or civilian (each trait above has a corollary in civilian life), professional or amateur, or just enjoy reading about leadership or military history, but it could have been better for its intended purpose.

This book is excellent reading to inspire leadership. Its greatest asset is the fact that Connelly

selects great leaders and writing that characterizes their personal leadership styles.

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