

THE APPLICATION OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP FOR SENIOR LEADERS: THE S-CALM MODEL

INTRODUCTION

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) describes ethical leadership as requiring 'understanding and critical thinking skills that must be cultivated and exercised throughout a leader's development.'¹ The S-CALM Model is a functional toolkit for the application of key principles of ethical leadership in times of heightened stress especially when in command in a difficult situation. 'It has been designed to encompass ideas from four disciplines that are often not put together, which is what gives it use as an applied tool. The four components that combine to create the S-CALM Model are: ethical leadership theory, military ethics, military leadership doctrine and behavioural science concepts' as shown in Figure 1.²



Figure 1: Four Disciplines of the S-CALM Model.³

In this text three themes will be explored. Firstly, the question why senior leaders make unethical decisions will be investigated. Secondly, the S-CALM Model of applied ethical leadership will be explained. Finally, the application of ethical leadership will be described. Throughout the text, the S-CALM Model has been conceptualised for senior leaders and is presented using the Defence Leadership Centre's three domains of, Lead Self, Lead People and Lead Organisation.

WHY SENIOR LEADERS MAKE UNETHICAL DECISIONS?

Before examining what drives good people under stress to make unethical decisions that they later regret, it is important to focus on some early research termed 'Background

Concepts'. These concepts came from research conducted primarily in the 1960s following investigation into the activities of the Nazis. The three background concepts which formed the basis of the research into the S-CALM Model are: the banality of evil, incremental steps and the power of the situation

Background Concepts. The idea of the banality of evil came about following the trial of the captured Nazi Adolf Eichmann. Eichmann had been one of the architects of what the Nazis termed the final solution and was responsible for the death of five million people. After his arrest he was taken to Jerusalem for trial. Hannah Arendt, a reporter was covering the trial. Arendt commented that 'the trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terrifyingly normal.'⁴ From her experience, Arendt coined the term 'The Banality of Evil'. If something is banal, it is normal, everyday. She believed that anyone could be an Eichmann. The central theme of the 'Banality of Evil' is that everyone has the ability to do evil acts depending on the situation.

The second background concept is that unethical acts are conducted in incremental steps. The American psychologist Stanley Milgram was intrigued by the Eichmann trial and wanted to establish if Americans could have conducted crimes like the Holocaust. He conducted a series of experiments and one of the lessons from them was that once people started on a course of action and were committed they continued because of the need to be consistent with their actions. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has also noted that unethical actions tend to start with these incremental steps and refer to the process as 'a spiral of violence in which violations may become not only more and more serious but also more and more acceptable in the eyes of those who commit them.'⁵ Each time that an individual or group commits an act there is a strong obligation to retain consistency with this action and continue. There then comes a point when to stop would mean admitting that the actions already conducted were unethical, therefore people commit to further acts and actions spiral out of control.

Finally, there is the concept of the power of the situation. Milgram alluded to the power of the situation that causes people to act in ways against their rational thinking. However, most people do not recognise how their environment influences them. Therefore, they would tend not to agree that the 'behaviour that we think is under control of central motives, or traits, is really very sensitive to situational manipulation.'⁶ The way that our environment affects our behaviours is known as the power of the situation. Some of this power of the situation can be brought about by stress. Research has demonstrated that 'stress can affect our perception of a situation.'⁷ Research also suggests that the application of stressors can affect the way that personality functions as an individual applies a series of coping mechanisms. Therefore, if stressors cause people to act in ways that they would not want to, the question must be asked what are the stressors that affect military leaders?

Situational Influencers. Recorded situations of unethical actions demonstrate 'just how insubstantial the situational factors that cause troubling moral failures seem to be.'⁸ However, returning to the question of what the common situational influencers in the military are that build to influence our actions. After examining case study reports and enquires into poor ethical behaviour a group of influencers can be identified as being the common ones that increase the pressure on individuals to act badly. The research consolidates the common influencers into five groups: 'hostile environment, normalised violence, weak

leadership/lack of supervision, lack of resource/fatigue and enhanced emotional state.⁹ It should be noted that 'although these five common situational influencers have been presented as separate items, they are in fact more complex than this and there is a large degree of overlap between them. For example, a person who is fatigued is more likely to be in an enhanced emotional state.'¹⁰ The five situational influencers are at Figure 2 below.



Figure 2: Situational Influencers.¹¹

Situational Influencers: Lead Self. There are two situational influencers, weak leadership and lack of supervision and enhanced emotional state, which fall in the domain of Lead Self.

- **Weak Leadership and Lack of Supervision (Self).** Although research has demonstrated that the power of the situation is more dominant than individual personality, it is important to consider why 'different people behave differently through they may find themselves in similar circumstances.'¹² This variation is driven by each individuals personality which consists of 'an individual's beliefs, values, attitudes, perspectives and their moral identity.'¹³ Therefore the way that people react in stressful situations can be determined by their personality and consequently self-leadership becomes crucial, especially for senior leaders who mainly operate in an unsupervised manner. In these testing situations it is the personality aspect of the moral identity, in particular the moral compass which will be explored later, that can be influenced and result in weak leadership.
- **Enhanced Emotional State.** In situations where leaders face intense emotions, their ability to do the right thing is often reduced. Under stress judgement can be clouded by heightened emotions and it has been shown that 'emotional reaction at the moment [of stress] is more influential in determining choice than the rational evaluation of options that may have been conducted beforehand.'¹⁴ Sometimes referred to as arousal, the common emotions in combat tend to be anger, rage, frustration and disgust. Especially in counter insurgency operations there is a feeling of comparative morality, in that 'they do it so why shouldn't we?' This links to frustration, with leaders wanting 'fair combat' rather than taking casualties without a chance to engage the

enemy, there is research to show that in these situations there is 'the potential for frustration to be translated into violence.'¹⁵ In peacetime, arousal can be associated with emotions such as greed or lust. For example, in 2017 a two-star officer was found guilty of dishonestly and fraudulently claiming £48,000 and in 2024 another two-star was found guilty of disgraceful conduct of an indecent kind, both were dismissed and given prison sentences.

Situational Influencers: Lead People. There are two situational influencers, weak leadership and lack of supervision and lack of resources and fatigue that are in Lead People domain.

- **Weak Leadership and Lack of Supervision (Group).** When a leader displays weak leadership and a lack of supervision, they no longer control the ethical direction that is taken by their people. When leaders do not display the correct level of supervision, people can be susceptible to 'Ethical Drift'. Ethical drift has been defined as 'an incremental deviation from ethical practice that goes unnoticed by individuals who justify the deviations as acceptable and who believe themselves to be maintaining their ethical boundaries.'¹⁶ This unconscious and incremental deviation from agreed ethical standards can allow followers to become influenced by other situational influencers and conduct unethical actions.
- **Lack of Resources and Fatigue.** In many situations, leaders feel that they do not have the correct level of resource to complete the task. This maybe in the amount of materiel, such as equipment or funding and it can lead to a degree of hopelessness. However, in many case studies the two key resources lacking were time and people. Leaders found that they did not have enough time to do things as they should and had to prioritise what actions they could achieve in the limited time given. Recent NATO doctrine confirmed that 'time pressure has also been shown to negatively affect moral decision making, with those put under such conditions being less likely to exhibit ethical behaviour.'¹⁷ It was similar in personnel, not enough people to conduct actions as they would have wanted, so corners were cut to meet outputs.

This deficiency of people and time invariably led to fatigue amongst those in organisations. We know that the human body requires eight hours sleep a night to regenerate and that prolonged periods of less than this reduces cogitative ability. Leaders who lack sleep make poor cognitive decisions. In a study conducted during a 54-hour military exercise, 'command performance dropped by thirty percent after the first night without sleep and by sixty percent after the second.'¹⁸ Many leaders are reluctant to believe such findings, asserting that motivation and determination can overcome fatigue and that 'senior officers imagined that they did not need eight hours sleep.'¹⁹ Nevertheless, evolution has not prepared humans for prolonged periods of stress brought on by a lack of sleep.

Situational Influencers: Lead Organisation. There are two situational influencers that reflect the culture and climate of the organisation that are in the Lead Organisation domain, they are hostile environment and normalised violence.

- **Hostile Environment.** A hostile environment is one in which a person feels under threat or uncomfortable due to a perception of danger. People tend to act differently

in a hostile environment than they would in an environment where they do not perceive a threat. A hostile environment produces stress which triggers the body's fight, flight or freeze response, this can cause physiological changes like increased blood pressure, heart and breathing rates. When constantly exposed to a hostile environment, the new level of enmity soon becomes the acceptable norm. The increased pressure of having to be constantly alert and aware leads to an outpouring of emotional responses when given the opportunity. A hostile environment is closely linked to normalised violence below, in that the longer people are exposed to it the less aware they become of their behaviour changes and their moral disengagement, this again is ethical drift.

- **Normalised Violence.** Everyone has exposure to a level of violence, but for most people their violence threshold is high and even small acts of violence can cause a strong reaction. However, if violence is seen as an immutable part of our daily life, it is soon accepted as normal and the threshold of violence is lowered. The longer that someone is immersed in a violent situation, the more likely they will see violence as normal. In this state the 'range of acceptable behaviour becomes so wide and there is no clear moral reference point for right and wrong'.²⁰ Normalised environments can routinely exist in less extreme settings than physical violence, such as an aggressive line manager or an organisation with a culture of toxic masculinity.

Common Behaviours. There are around 182 different cognitive behaviours. In this text 'cognitive behaviours refer to how individuals and groups think and respond to the situation that they find themselves.'²¹ However, S-CALM Model research has identified 12 common behaviours that tend to happen in stressful, military situations and lead to unethical actions. The cognitive behaviours have been divided into six common individual and six common group behaviours. It should be noted that most behaviours are not in themselves unethical, but in the wrong situation can lead to unethical behaviour taking place.

Six Individual Behaviours: Lead Self. The first group of six cognitive behaviours are those that mainly appear in oneself and therefore fall into the Lead Self domain.

- **Social Comparison Theory and Conformity.** These two theories have been grouped together as they are triggered by similar situations and produce similar unethical actions.²² Social Comparison Theory was first discussed by Festinger in 1954.²³ The definition of this behaviour is when individuals compare 'behaviours and opinions with those of others in order to establish the correct or socially approved way of thinking and behaving.'²⁴ Basically it is when individuals use others as a basis to decide their own abilities, attitudes and judgements. Conformity was first discussed by Asch in 1951.²⁵ It is defined as a change in 'deep-seated private and enduring behaviour and attitudes due to group pressure.'²⁶ In Asch's experiment 70 per cent of those taking part followed the groups irrational lead, rather than make their own more rational decision. This tendency to follow the prevailing attitudes and behaviours of others is intuitive in nature. It forms a strong social obligation to conform and is often termed as peer pressure.
- **De-individuation.** De-individuation was first discussed by Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb in 1952.²⁷ It is defined as the 'process whereby people lose their sense of socialised individual identity and engage in unsocialised, often antisocial,

behaviours.¹²⁸ It is in some ways like conformity, however in their series of experiments Festinger and his associates believed group members lost the perception of being individuals and instead focused their attention on the group. They noticed that people could 'indulge in forms of behaviour in which, when alone, they would not indulge.'¹²⁹ A further study 'implicates anonymity as one of the main factors that influences deindividuation.'¹³⁰ Therefore this behaviour sees individuals lose their identity and accountability to the group, in order to reduce their personal responsibility for unethical actions.

- **Obedience.** Obedience was first discussed by Milgram in 1961.³¹ Obedience is defined as a 'behaviour in compliance with a direct command, often one issued by a person in a position of authority.'³² It sees people unthinkingly acting in accordance with rules or orders, especially if the authority system is perceived as legitimate.
- **Cognitive Dissonance Theory.** Cognitive Dissonance Theory was first discussed by Festinger in 1957.³³ It is defined as a 'state of psychological tension produced by simultaneously having two opposing cognitions.'³⁴ Festinger proposed that we try to seek harmony in our beliefs and behaviours and try to reduce tension that this inconsistency causes. In these situations, people generally know what is right, but want to do something else, which they know to be wrong. In this emotional state of conflict people very often choose to do what is wrong and then mitigate their actions to try and reconcile their behaviour with their beliefs.
- **Bystander Effect.** The Bystander Effect was first discussed by Darley and Latane in 1968.³⁵ It is defined as the concept where 'people are less likely to help in an emergency when they are with others than when alone. The greater the number, the less likely it is that anyone will help.'³⁶ One of the main drivers for this concept is what is known as the 'Diffusion of Responsibility'. Diffusion of responsibility is the 'tendency of an individual to assume that others will take responsibility' and therefore decide not to act.³⁷
- **Status Quo Bias.** Status Quo Bias was first discussed by Samuelson and Zeckhauser in 1988.³⁸ Status Quo Bias is defined as 'doing nothing or maintaining one's previous position.'³⁹ It is often seen when leaders display a bias for the current situation and an unwillingness to change what is established and has worked before. The use of this bias in units can often be disguised as tradition as it has been noted that 'when poor or undesirable behaviours are institutionalised, they are embedded in organisational memory, solidified in routines and structures.'⁴⁰ As with many behaviours, it relies on the consensus of individuals to accept the existing state of affairs and not challenge the circumstances.

Six Group Behaviours: Lead People and Organisation. The second group of six cognitive behaviours are those that mainly appear in groups and as such fall into the Lead People and Lead Organisation domains. As with the first six they are not in themselves unethical, but in the wrong situation they can also lead to unethical behaviour taking place.

- **Groupthink.** Groupthink was first discussed by Janis in 1972.⁴¹ Groupthink is defined as 'a mode of thinking in highly cohesive groups in which the desire to reach a

unanimous agreement overrides the motivation to adopt proper rational decision-making procedures.¹⁴² It can be seen as a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from ingroup pressures. Militaries are susceptible to groupthink, as it is common in highly cohesive, hierarchical groups in stressful situations. Many parts of Defence rely on groupthink to ensure that all elements act in a corporate way. But as with many other behaviours, this reliance on groupthink means that when a group acts unethically it can be disastrous. A group tends to generate 'prejudices, simplifications and discrimination' and 'when another group is declared to be an enemy, these tendencies become even more acute.'¹⁴³ In this case a group closes ranks, conducts collective rationalisation and has an inherent belief in the morality of their decisions.

- **Risky Shift.** Risky Shift was first discussed by Stoner in 1961.¹⁴⁴ Risky shift is defined as the 'tendency for group discussion to produce group decisions that are more risky than the mean of members pre-discussion opinions, but only if the pre-discussion mean already favoured risk.'¹⁴⁵ In theory it is possible that the group could decide to take less risk, however it has been shown that 'arguments favouring risk taking are more powerful than those favouring cautiousness.'¹⁴⁶ This behaviour is linked to many others, it relates to the individual behaviours of conformity and social comparison theory and the group behaviour of groupthink, in that individuals will go along with the majority opinion of the group. It also relies heavily on the diffusion of responsibility which leads to more extreme decisions being made. The idea that groups make riskier decisions than individuals is vital to militaries, which are risk-taking organisations, but in unethical situations it can lead to inferior decision making.
- **Authority Bias.** Authority was first discussed by Milgram in 1961.¹⁴⁷ Authority bias has been defined as 'the tendency of people to blindly follow the advice, suggestions, or instructions of others who are in positions of authority.'¹⁴⁸ This behaviour describes 'the tendency to believe or trust ideas that include some kind of badge or symbol of authority.'¹⁴⁹ In the military this can relate to unit identities as well as badges of rank and qualifications. In Defence where leaders have formal and legal trappings of authority, by having titles and wearing rank this can be magnified. It has been noted that 'in hierarchical systems, the abuse of authority is an inherent risk.'¹⁵⁰ Therefore, a group can be dominated by a charismatic, but immoral leader and coerced into conducting unethical acts.
- **Dehumanisation.** Dehumanisation was first discussed by Kelman in 1973.¹⁵¹ It is defined as the process of 'stripping people of their dignity and humanity.'¹⁵² The ICRC state that 'the humanity of the other side is denied by attributing to the enemy contemptible traits, intentions and behaviours.'¹⁵³ To a certain degree, this process is accepted in the military, by using the term 'the enemy' to denote the people that they fight. Using the term of 'the enemy' helps to avoid service personnel having to think about killing other humans. Another euphemism used at a more senior level is 'collateral damage' when civilians are accidentally killed, to erase the reality of the situation.
- **Othering.** Othering was first discussed by Levi-Strauss in 1955.¹⁵⁴ It is defined as 'transforming a difference into otherness so as to create an in-group and an out-

group.⁵⁵ This differentiation between the in-group ('us') and the out-group ('them') is very common in militaries, which are very quick to assign stereotypes, which in turn builds team ethos. However, when it is taken to the extreme it is a pathway to dehumanisation. The key takeaway for leaders is "that 'They' are never less than 'us'".⁵⁶

- **Demonisation.** Demonisation was first discussed by Faure in 2008.⁵⁷ Faure defined demonisation 'as the characterization of individuals, groups or political bodies as evil.'⁵⁸ There is a danger of demonisation when our adversaries are perceived as only doing evil, while we are perceived as only doing good. Conflict is never that black and white and attempting to simplify conflicts into these categories should be avoided, combat is invariably a shade of grey with both sides doing both good and bad actions.

Flow of Unethical Actions. In a stressful situation, the power of the situation builds up. This stressful situation might be combat, however more routinely it might just be a busy day in the office, when the organisation needs to produce an output under the pressure of time. Under the power of the situation, the situational influencers take effect and cause people to behave in unethical ways. This chain reaction is termed the 'Flow of Unethical Actions'. Below in Figure 3 is a diagram which demonstrates how this flow operates.

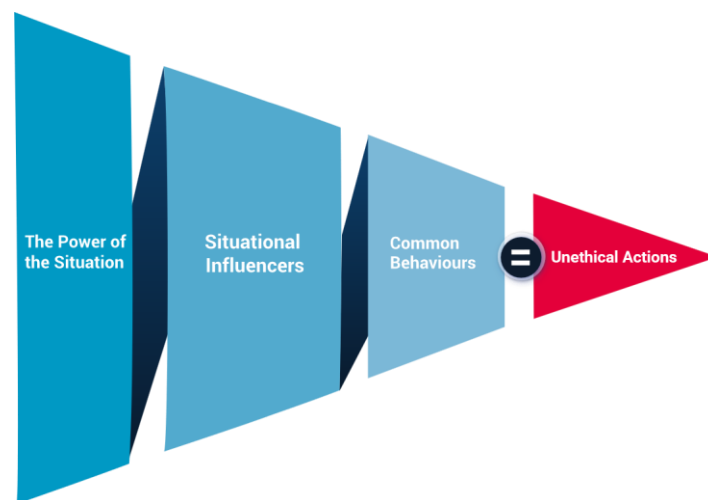


Figure 3: The Flow of Unethical Actions.

This flow tends to be dominated by what Daniel Kahneman called in *Thinking, Fast and Slow* System 1 thinking. This intuitive, fast thinking can drive people into actions that they often regret when they have time to reflect on their behaviour. Research has shown that in difficult, stressful situations there is a tendency for cognitive functioning to be restricted as 'stress leads to automatic rather than controlled thinking.'⁵⁹ This allows individuals and organisations to be driven by their System 1 thinking, through the flow of unethical actions without considering the consequences of their actions.

S-CALM MODEL – AN APPLIED ETHICAL LEADERSHIP MODEL

Background. At the 2014 Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Leadership Conference the ‘consensus was that while V & S [Values and Standards] in combination with LOAC [Law of Armed Conflict] was absolutely essential, they are not sufficient in equipping officers and soldiers with the necessary “tool box” with which to deal with “real world” ethical problems in complex operational environments.’⁶⁰ In order to fill this requirement for an ethical toolkit, the S-CALM Model was developed. The S-CALM Model wraps concepts from virtue ethics, leadership doctrine, ethical leadership theory and behavioural science into a straightforward, understandable format and acts as a handrail for ethical decision-making when faced with the fatigue, stresses and emotions of command.

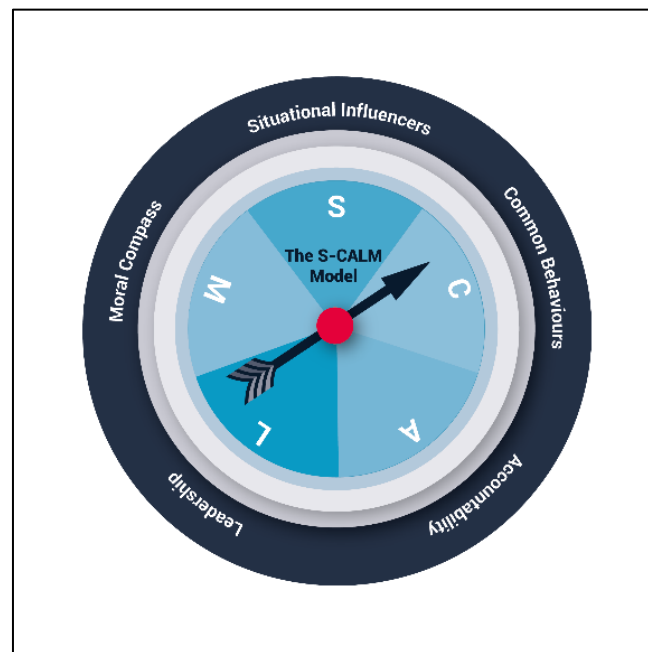


Figure 4: The Elements of the S-CALM Model.⁶¹

S-CALM: S - Situational Influencers. The first aspect of the S-CALM Model is an awareness by leaders that they will be placed in stressful situations and the effect of this might be the application of external pressures that will exacerbate their behaviours. Recognising these influencers and how to mitigate them is a fundamental skill for an ethical leader. Reflection is imperative for if a leader ‘enters combat without taking time to consider where they stand morally and ethically, it is already too late.’⁶² A leader might identify that they will be entering a hostile environment or do not have the right levels of supervision before they come under stress. Other influencers, such as enhanced emotional state, may only be noticed once immersed in the stressful situation. Education and cognitive resilience allow leaders to be more consistent in their behaviours regardless of the situation that they find themselves in. This ability is known as cross-situational consistency. ‘Cross-situational consistency is about our expectation that someone who is courageous on the battlefield, or in sports, will demonstrate that same courage in his or her work.’⁶³ This ability can be improved if leaders develop the capability to horizon scan for problems, so as not to be caught up in an unethical situation without time to reflect on the appropriate actions to be taken. Therefore, inertia is not an option for the ethical leader; they must be active and

remain situationally aware of their surroundings and prepared to act as required to maintain the right ethical balance in their decision-making and actions. All five of the influencers could be at play in these situations and leaders need to be able to recognise them. Later sections will encompass the scope of mitigating these influencers.

S-CALM: C - Common Behaviours. The next crucial element of applying the S-CALM Model is to recognise and mitigate the common behaviours. Leaders must understand and be able to identify the twelve common cognitive behaviours in both themselves and their people and mitigate their effects. Leaders must know themselves so that they can identify their susceptibility to certain behaviours. This requires reflection and self-awareness to be prepared to mitigate their likely behaviours when under pressure caused by the situational influencers. Leaders also need to understand their people and their organisation. They can then set the narrative of what is and is not acceptable behaviour. This allows them to distinguish any of the six common group behaviours, either before or when under stress, and prepares them to steer their people away from unethical actions. The main mitigation of common behaviours in the S-CALM Model is achieved through the application of accountability, leadership and the moral compass, which will all be explored in later sections.

Case Study 1 – Common Behaviours: Lieutenant General Mike Jackson, Pristina Airport, 1999. An example of a senior leader overcoming common behaviours can be found in Lieutenant General Mike Jackson's intelligent disobedience during the Kosovo conflict of 1999. As General Jackson led NATO's KFOR into Kosovo, the Russians declared that they would send a contingent from Bosnia to Kosovo to occupy Pristina Airport. The Supreme Allied Commander Europe was US Four-Star General Wesley Clark, who ordered General Jackson to deploy troops immediately to Pristina Airport to stop the Russians by force if required. General Jackson refused saying 'Sir, I am not going to start World War Three for you.'⁶⁴ General Clark then said 'Mike, do you understand that as a NATO commander I'm giving you a legal order, and if you don't accept that order you'll have to resign your position and get out of the chain of command?' Jackson replied 'SACEUR, I do'. General Clark then concluded 'OK. I'm giving you an order to block the runways at Pristina airfield. I want it done. Is that clear?'⁶⁵ Jackson still refused to obey the order. The US Government did not back General Clark's order, but the UK Government backed General Jackson's reasonable challenge and intelligent disobedience and no troops were deployed. This case study demonstrates a clear example of a senior leader 'who was prepared to carry out intelligent disobedience in the face of an order that, although legal, was ill advised and could have escalated an already tense situation.'⁶⁶

S-CALM: A – Accountability. Leaders are responsible for their own actions and accountable for the training and preparation of their people and their subsequent actions. Accountability can be defined as 'holding individuals legally responsible for their behaviour and imposing some form of sanction on them if warranted.'⁶⁷ The Defence advice to leaders' is that they must make sure they 'know who is accountable for what; and that you bear personal responsibility for your contribution.'⁶⁸ There are four types of accountability that operate within Defence situations, hierarchical, professional, legal and political.

Professional Accountability: Lead Self. Professional accountability is the benchmark that we hold ourselves to and is 'dependent on the individuals understanding and identifying with

the goals and ideals of the profession.¹⁶⁹ In Defence this can be identified when a leader is managing subject matter experts.

Hierarchical Accountability: Lead People. Hierarchical accountability is the orderly environment that operates in Defence and is 'bound by a set of values, discipline, tradition, unity and cohesion that form a professional military.'⁷⁰ It works via the chain of command with followers being accountable to their line managers.

Legal and Political Accountability: Lead Organisation. Legal accountability relates to operating within UK and International Humanitarian Law. Political accountability envisages senior officers being responsible to stakeholders, such as politicians, and ensuring that national interests are protected. However, in the age of the 'strategic corporal', leaders at every level need to ensure that all actions are conducted within the legal framework and in line with political direction.

Mastering Accountability. Accountability for ethical actions must start before entering a stressful situation. Leaders must prepare their organisations as best they can for possible situations. The soundest way to do this is through education and training. For instance, the British Army Standards offer a good means of understanding the issues of surrounding accountability and how to mitigate them. The British Army's Standards are designed to ensure that all individual and group behaviour is accountable. The Standards are lawfulness, acceptable behaviour and totally professional. Lawfulness relates to military justice, UK Criminal Law and International Humanitarian Law. Acceptable behaviour sets higher standards than society in attempting to protect both service personnel and civilians from unethical actions. Finally, professional behaviour is concerned with acting in an appropriate way to protect the reputation of Defence. The Standards provide a useful checklist for measuring accountability. Leaders should ensure that their actions are **Lawful, Acceptable and Professional (LAP)**, if they are, they are likely to be ethical also. Remembering LAP, assists a leader in stressful decision-making situations.

1st Key Question: The first question that a senior leader must ask themselves in a stressful situation is around accountability and is: **Are my actions lawful, acceptable and professional?** If the answer to each of these questions is yes, then the leader can assume that their actions are ethical. However, if the answer to anyone of these is no action needs to be taken to rectify the issue.

Case Study 2 – Accountability: 800th Military Police (MP) Brigade, Abu Gharib Prison, 2004. An example of poor accountability at a senior level can be found in the unethical actions which took place in Abu Gharib Prison, Iraq in 2004 by the 800th Military Police (MP) Brigade. The abuse of detainees by Corporal Charles Garner and Private Lynndie England on the night shift whilst under the command of Staff Sergeant 'Chip' Fredrick is well documented. The abuse was discovered when Sergeant Joe Darby handed in a CD of photos of the abuse to the US Army Criminal Investigation Command. The abuse had a strategic effect and sent shock waves around the world and Major General Antonio Taguba was tasked to report on the actions of the 800th MP Brigade at Abu Gharib. His report, commonly known as the *Taguba Report*, covered accountability.

- **Hierarchical Accountability.** The *Taguba Report* noted 'individual soldiers within the 800th MP Brigade and the 320th Battalion stationed throughout Iraq had very little contact during their tour of duty with either LTC (P) Phillabaum or BG Karpinski.'⁷¹

Lieutenant Colonel Phillabaum was the commander of the 320th Battalion stationed in Abu Ghraib and Brigadier General Karpinski commanded 800th MP Brigade and was responsible for all prisons in Iraq. The report concluded the 'laissez-faire attitude of management coupled with conflicting directives and ambiguous messages about what was acceptable behaviour towards prisoners weakened hierarchical accountability' at Abu Gharib.⁷² There is little doubt that the lack of hierarchical accountability by these two officers allowed for an environment in which abuse was conducted without check by the chain of command.

- **Professional Accountability.** The *Taguba Report* questioned the professional competence of the senior officers when it stated 'BG Karpinski was formally admonished in writing by LTG [Lieutenant General] Sanchez regarding the serious deficiencies in her Brigade. LTG Sanchez found that the performance of the 800th Brigade had not met the standards set by the Army.'⁷³ Professional standards had not been set or upheld by the senior leadership and this lack of professional performance and accountability had cascaded throughout the formation.
- **Legal Accountability.** The *Taguba Report* found that 'there is no evidence that BG Karpinski ever attempted to remind 800th MP Soldiers of the requirements of the Geneva Conventions regarding detainee treatment.'⁷⁴ The report confirmed that one of the 12 charges against Brigadier General Kaplinski was 'failing to ensure that MP Soldiers in the 800th MP Brigade knew, understood, and adhered to the protections afforded to detainees in the Geneva Convention.'⁷⁵ It could be argued that the soldiers might have known what they were doing was illegal, but in the ambiguous environment of Abu Gharib and without defined rules they conducted abuse unchecked.
- **Political Accountability.** The *Tauba Report* does not cover political accountability in any detail. However, since then there have been others who have investigated the political ramifications of the abuse. One investigator the concept of the strategic corporal stating, 'immoral behavior [sic] by even the lowest ranking soldier can have a strategic effect, as witnessed by the impact of the images of Private Lynndie England, a "strategic private," at Abu Ghraib prison.'⁷⁶ Other examinations have concentrated on the US Government of President George W. Bush. The conclusion of many researchers has been that 'although many of those in the [Bush] administration knew about detainee mistreatment they chose not to do anything about it.'⁷⁷

There were 11 service personnel found guilty and court marshalled. Brigadier General Kaplinski was reduced to colonel, relieved of command and found guilty of 12 charges including 'failing to ensure that numerous and reported accountability lapses at detention facilities throughout Iraq were corrected.'⁷⁸ A poll of the local population showed that 54 per cent of Iraqis believed that all Americans behaved in this way. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the commander in Iraq characterised the outcome of the Abu Ghraib abuse as clearly a defeat for his forces In Iraq.

S-CALM: L – Leadership. Courageous and moral leadership is paramount in ethical leadership. Leaders need to be able to both inspire and direct their organisation. There are six actions that can be taken to do this, two in each of the domains.

Lead Self: Set the Example, Gain Trust. Leaders need to set the moral tone and be the exemplar for their followers. Their attitudes and actions are critical as they need to be an ethical role model for their people. This is significant as it influences the actions of followers, research has demonstrated that having an ethical role model is likely to contribute to the development of ethical leadership in followers. For example, Canadian Defence Force research established ‘the ethical climate created within a unit by those in command before an operational deployment is likely to be replicated on operations.’⁷⁹ Trust in the leader is a vital commodity. Leaders must be consistent in their supervision, attitudes and activities, to build trust and mutual respect with their organisations. It is essential that followers trust their leaders’ abilities and have confidence in their ethical decision-making. Trust is developed and displayed by a leader in four dimensions: commitment, competence, caring and predictability. Much of this can be achieved by a leader demonstrating emotional intelligence, having empathy with their teams and therefore seeing themselves as others see them. It takes time for a leader to build trust and gain the confidence of their people that their ethical decisions are nearly always right. However, a leader can lose trust and confidence very quickly by violating their followers’ expectations in any one of the four dimensions, but especially predictability.

Lead People: Set Expectations, Apply Rewards and Discipline. There is a requirement for leaders to ensure that those in their organisation understand what is expected of them by establishing a clear, ethical vision. The Australian Defence Force believe that ‘setting expectations, monitoring performance and addressing any breaches provides subordinates a clear understanding of what is expected of them.’⁸⁰ Ensuring that the organisation understands what is expected of it is done by communicating a distinct vision. There is also the requirement in stressful situations to give an unambiguous intent on what is required. To do this leaders are likely to use both transformational and transactional leadership techniques to inspire their followers; ethical leadership is the only transformational leadership style that has a transactional element to it. British Army doctrine states that it is essential that ‘reward and punishment should be linked to desired standards of behaviour and performance.’⁸¹ Research has demonstrated that ‘if unethical decision making is rewarded, then higher incidence of unethical behavior [sic] is likely to occur’ and concludes ‘in situations in which potential reinforcement for unethical behavior [sic] does exist, it should be accompanied by strong punishment.’⁸² Therefore most militaries have a policy of robustly dealing with those that break their ethical code.

Lead Organisation: Loneliness of Command, Omission and Commission. There will be times when the leader will feel under considerable pressure to conform to the group. This difficult test of leadership is when the concept of ‘The

Loneliness of Command' comes into its own. Field Marshal The Viscount Slim explained how 'there will come a pause when everyone will look to you. They will look to you for leadership. Believe me, when that happens, you will feel very lonely.'⁸³ If a leader can maintain a psychological gap so that they are 'in' the team but not 'of' the team they will be able to make the difficult, ethical decision when the rest of the organisation want to do the easy, unethical action. 'This concept of psychological distancing, of being alone in the group is termed the loneliness of command ... The ability to conduct this type of relationship is built on mutual respect and an understanding of the different roles and responsibilities within a team.'⁸⁴ The second aspect is understanding that unethical acts are conducted by either commission or omission by a leader. Acts of commission are when a leader takes an active decision to act in an unethical way. Acts of omission are ones in which unethical acts take place because of inaction and passive behaviour by a leader. In many cases 'omission comes in the form of choosing status quo or perhaps just deferring a decision or not even considering possible options. In these cases, the lack of a decision is the same thing as a decision, just a bad one.'⁸⁵ Therefore, it is critical that a senior leader make a decision when faced with an ethical dilemma.

2nd Key Question: The second question that a senior leader must ask themselves in a stressful situation relates to leadership and is: **Do I need to apply the Loneliness of Command?** If the answer to this question is yes, the leader will need to consider what decision or direction they need to give to their organisation to rectify the unethical action.

S-CALM: M – Moral Compass. The application of the M in S-CALM is split between the domains; with Virtue Ethics in Lead People and Organisation domains whilst the Moral Compass is in the Lead Self domain.

Virtue Ethics: Lead People and Lead Organisation. Like most Western militaries, Defence uses virtue ethics as the mainstay of its ethical construct. Virtue ethics are important to Defence as unlike the other ethical theories 'it is not just concerned with a single act, but with how the repetition of an act, forming a habit, develops a person's character over time.'⁸⁶ Defence calls its virtue ethics core values and they vary slightly between services. By their very nature the core values are subjective and open to interpretation. For example, how do you measure integrity or loyalty. Depending on perception, what might be an ethical redline for one, may not be for another. It could also be argued that they are very generic to military organisations. To counter this, Professor Phillip McCormack attempted to place the core values on a spectrum from one extreme to another. His contention being that most people are in the middle ground, the famous 'Golden Mean'. Occasionally they may stray into the subjective zone, which is tolerable behaviour. However, it is not until an individual enters the extreme objective zone, where a behaviour can be seen to be either in deficit or in excess, that their conduct becomes no longer relative to the situation and is considered to be objectively wrong. An amended version of McCormack's diagram illustrating this idea is at Figure 5. The aim is to immerse individuals in the

organisations core values by education and exposure so that they are adopted as their own values.

Objective	Subjective	Mean	Subjective	Objective
Recklessness		Courage		Cowardice
Disorder Neglect		Discipline		Pernickety Over Critical
Ignorance Disrespect		Respect for Others		Unthinking Uncritical Acceptance
Deceit		Integrity		Saintliness
Treachery		Loyalty		Blind Obedience
Selfishness		Selfless Commitment		Martyr

Figure 5: Spectrum of Core Values.

Moral Compass: Lead Self. When an individual has internalised the organisations core values they tend to have a moral compass that points true and display moral courage in difficult circumstances. General Sir Nicholas Carter, when he was Chief of the General Staff, stated 'living our Values and Standards is ever more important, providing the moral compass against which to judge the most appropriate actions.'⁸⁷ But what is the moral compass? It is encapsulated by the phrase 'doing the right thing on the difficult day when no one is looking.'⁸⁸ The premise is that individuals are expected to act virtuously whatever the circumstances and external pressure. This is a difficult aspiration especially when leaders are deployed on operations where they are susceptible to incremental ethical drift, which acts like a magnet pulling their moral compass away from true. A leader must be aware of this drift and be prepared to 'challenge any unacceptable behaviour the moment it occurs.'⁸⁹ In addition, a leader must not allow their moral compass to swing wildly. They cannot enforce the rules one day and personally break them the next, this inconsistency will quickly lead to a lack of trust. A recommended method for leaders to avoid personal ethical drift is to engage with a trusted peer, who can give honest feedback on their attitudes and behaviours.

3rd Key Question: The third question that a leader must ask themselves in a stressful situation concerns the moral compass and is: **Am I doing the morally right thing?** If the answer to this question is no, the leader perceives that they or their organisation are not acting ethically and they need to take measures to rectify the issues.

Case Study 3 – Moral Compass: General Sir Patrick Sanders, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment Incident, 2022. In June 2022 a video went viral on social media showing eight members of the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment participating in an orgy with a civilian woman. General Sir Patrick Sanders had just been appointed as the

Chief of the General Staff and was outraged at the video. He ordered an investigation by the Royal Military Police, which found that the sex had been consensual and established that no crime had been committed. General Sanders believed that although the act was legal, it was unethical and stating that he had 'temporarily lost trust in the Parachute Regiment's 3rd Battalion.'⁹⁰ He could not punish those responsible, but he removed the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment from an operational deployment to Kosovo in September 2022. The colonel commandant of the Parachute Regiment, Lieutenant General Andrew Harrison, wrote a letter to the battalion noting that they would 'be devastated by the lost opportunity to serve on operations once again in the Balkans'. However, he hoped that they would 'reflect on and where required adjust behaviours and culture that undermines the reputation and operational effectiveness of an exceptional battalion.'⁹¹ Although unpopular with some elements of the Army, General Sanders had exercised the loneliness of command to step in and uphold the Defence's ethical standards. He wrote a letter to the Army stating that 'my message to the Army is clear: Our licence to operate is founded on trust and confidence and we must hold ourselves to the highest standards.'⁹²

THE APPLICATION OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

The Application. The first factor that a senior leader will need to identify is that they are in a stressful situation which is having power over them and possibly their organisation. Leaders then need to recognise the situational influencers. It may be that some of these, such as Lack of Resource or Lack of Supervision, can be recognised and mitigated before the stressful situation is encountered. This preemptive work requires reflection using System 2 thinking, described by Daniel Kahneman as 'the subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration.'⁹³ It also requires emotional intelligence, especially self-awareness and self-regulation. Research has shown that 'self-aware leaders understand who they are and what they want to achieve.'⁹⁴ The requirement for self-awareness, that internal state where a leader understands their strengths and weaknesses, their own resources to be resilient and the impact they have on their people is important. Also crucial is 'self-reflection [which] is central to leadership. The more you self-reflect the better you know yourself: your strengths, weaknesses, abilities and areas for development.'⁹⁵ By examining past experiences and considering future situations, a leader will be able to prepare themselves and their organisations better for the stress of a situation. Once in the situation leaders should identify and mitigate influencers from affecting both themselves and their organisations. This should avoid them being susceptible to the common behaviours, but they should also be ready to mitigate any cognitive changes that they recognise happening. They do this by the application of accountability, leadership and the moral compass. This mitigation is achieved by using the STOP Protocol, explained below. The application of ethical leadership is expressed diagrammatically in Figure 6.



Figure 6: The Application of the S-CALM Model.

STOP Protocol: Lead Self. The STOP Protocol is an applied tool that is used by leaders to evoke how to apply the S-CALM Model under the stress of the situation. The elements of the STOP Protocol are at Figure 7 below. Each letter of STOP stands for a step which is conducted to allow a leader not to be driven into unethical actions.

- **S – Stop what you are doing.** If you believe that your behaviour or the behaviour of your organisation is not right, then stop doing it. Taking this simple first step acts like a brake on unethical actions, which tend to spiral out of control and get bigger. Therefore, the first vital step is not to continue with omission, but to be proactive, take the initiative and give a clear order to cease the activity.
- **T – Take a few deep breaths.** It has been proven that ‘people can behave in an ethical way — they just need time’ and taking a few deep breaths is a way of gaining that time.⁹⁶ Daniel Kahneman describes how ‘the way to block errors that originate in System 1 is simple in principle: recognize the signs that you are in a cognitive minefield, slow down, and ask for reinforcement from System 2.’⁹⁷ Taking a few conscious breaths allows a leader to engage their System 2 thinking and to move from an emotional to a rational state. Combat Tactical Breathing, which is practiced by the US Navy Seals, ‘focuses on slowing the breathing rate down by breathing through the nostrils, counting to four for each inhale and exhale.’⁹⁸ This second step of taking ‘a few deep breaths allows the leader to move from a state of being under the power of the situation to one in which they gain control of their cognitive abilities.’⁹⁹
- **O – Observe any situational influencers and common behaviours.** Once System 2, rational thinking is achieved, the leader can observe any situational influencers and common behaviours that are affecting them and their organisation. For example, is there a hostile environment or are emotions running high? Or are they conforming to the group, or displaying cognitive dissonance? This step allows a leader to gain clarity on how they and their organisation may be under the control of the power of the situation.

- **P – Proceed considering accountability, leadership and moral compass.** There will be situations in which a leader has identified unethical actions, but they need to continue with the task. Therefore, they will need to proceed, but with a different approach. They should now consider their accountability, leadership and moral compass to ensure that they continue with their mission in an ethical manner. To assist in this, they should ask themselves the three key questions which were described earlier:
 - **Accountability:** Are my actions lawful, acceptable and professional?
 - **Leadership:** Do I need to apply the loneliness of command?
 - **Moral Compass:** Am I doing the morally right thing?

The STOP PROTOCOL

S – Stop what you are doing.

T – Take a few deep breaths.

O – Observe Situational Influencers and Common Behaviours.

P – Proceed considering accountability, leadership and moral compass, ask:

Accountability: Are my actions Lawful, Acceptable and Professional?

Leadership: Do I need to apply the Loneliness of Command?

Moral Compass: Am I doing the morally right thing?



Figure: 7 The STOP Protocol.

The STOP Protocol is a simple applied tool which allows a leader under stress to guide themselves and their organisation into ethical action when exposed to the power of the situation. NATO Doctrine confirms its use by stating that ‘when time is available to engage reflective processes, as demonstrated by system two of brain processing, unethical behaviour is restrained. Leaders therefore need to be aware of the importance of reflection in mitigating unethical behaviour.’¹⁰⁰

Case Study 4: STOP Protocol. In 1982, Admiral Sandy Woodward commanded the Aircraft Carrier Group in the Falklands War. An Argentinian Air Force Boeing 707 reconnaissance plane, nicknamed the Burglar, approached the Carrier Group four times on the route south, each time Sea Harriers were dispatched to chase the Burglar away. Admiral Woodward recalled that ‘by now, everyone was in a high state of agitation.’¹⁰¹ Therefore he asked permission to shoot this aircraft down from Fleet Headquarters in the UK and this was agreed providing that ‘a) he came within a certain specific range limit and b) we had positive identification that he was indeed, the Burglar.’¹⁰² Next day the Burglar appeared and was chased away, Admiral Woodward commented that the Burglar was ‘becoming something of a habit, a bad one and unwelcome with it.’¹⁰³ That night, the Burglar appeared again and was heading directly for the Carrier Group it was now too late to dispatch Sea Harriers to intercept it and in two minutes it would be within missile range. Admiral Woodward wrote that ‘the Burglar has been visiting us

regularly now for three days. It is time to remove him.'¹⁰⁴ He could have made the immediate decision to shoot down the plane and no one would have questioned his authority. However, he took a breath, allowed his System 2 thinking to kick in and asked if there were any scheduled commercial flights in the area and he was told no, nevertheless he asked that the flight path of the Burglar be very quickly plotted. The plane's flight path if extended each way was a direct line from Durban in South Africa to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Admiral Woodward immediately ordered 'weapons tight', which restricted anyone firing at the aircraft. A Sea Harrier was dispatched and it identified the aircraft as a Brazilian airliner. If Admiral Woodward had given the authority for missile launch the airliner would have been immediately shot down. There rightly would have been world condemnation, as happened later that year in an incident on 1 September 1983 when the Soviet Union shot down a Korean airliner near Japan thinking it was a spy plane killing 269 people. There is little doubt that the US would have removed support to the UK and most likely that the Task Force would have been recalled before it had even got close to the Falklands Islands. Admiral Woodward was under considerable pressure to make a vital decision with less than one minute to go, had he given the order it is extremely unlikely that anyone in the Carrier Group would have questioned it with disastrous results, but by taking a breath and allowing his rational thought process to take over he made the right decision under stress.

Ethical Education: Lead People. There have been a series of initiatives to improve ethical education in Defence in recent years. The introduction of mandatory Bystander Training has been one that has increased service personnel and civil servants' awareness of how situations can affect individuals and what actions to take. However, the Bystander Effect is only one of 12 common behaviours that have been identified in stressful situations. Therefore, a wider exposure of the S-CALM Model to all leaders in Defence would assist in the development of a better understanding of how to lead self, people and organisations in an ethical manner.

Ethical Culture: Lead Organisation. There have also been initiatives to improve the climate and culture within Defence over recent years, such as the Army's Operation Teamwork. Nevertheless, there are two fundamental elements of culture which require leaders at all levels, but especially senior leaders, to promote, these are reasonable challenge and psychological safety. For reasonable challenge to function, leaders and organisations need to embrace the concept of intelligent disobedience and allow it to work correctly. It is not just the leader that has to be able to accept a challenge, it also calls for a mature attitude amongst the organisation. This has been described as the requirement for followers to examine 'ways in which a trusted relationship can be developed with leaders that will support speaking candidly and acting with integrity.'¹⁰⁵ The ability to speak honestly can only be achieved when followers believe that there is a high degree of psychological safety in the organisation. Psychological safety has been defined as a feeling of being 'able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career.'¹⁰⁶ A psychologically safe organisation can be created 'if the leader is supportive, coaching-oriented, and has non-defensive responses to questions and challenges' in this situation organisation 'members are likely to conclude that the team constitutes a safe environment.'¹⁰⁷ To achieve this behavioural change in their people, leaders need to ensure that they are applying rewards and discipline to motivate behavioural change. John Adair in *Effective Motivation* studied this mix of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and stated that for most people '50% of motivation comes from within a person, and 50% from his or her environment, especially from the leadership encountered therein.'¹⁰⁸ Leaders must be both

fair and be perceived to be fair in their use of rewards and discipline. Finally, senior leaders must not allow themselves to conduct omission if they are presented with difficult dilemmas, to do so will soon undermine the ethical culture of their organisation.

Ethical Hierarchy. Most people across the world hold to the ideals of an Ethical Foundation, which respects life, liberty and justice and have Ethical Principles, including the concepts of equality, worth and dignity. When a person joins Defence there is an expectation that its members will not only have these common ideals but will also be imbued with the organisation's own moral code, for example the Army Values and Standards. However, leaders need more substance to applying ethical leadership than just an understanding virtue ethics. The S-CALM Model therefore allows leaders to make sound judgements and decisions when faced with difficult ethical dilemmas in stressful situations. These concept of an Ethical Hierarchy is captured in Figure 8.



Figure 8: Ethical Leadership Hierarchy.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion. A major part of being an ethical leader at senior levels is to prepare for situations before being exposed to them. Having this 'knowledge that situational forces determine most of our conduct' is important as it allows leaders to anticipate what might happen and to mitigate their actions.¹¹⁰ It is vital that senior leaders not only prepare themselves but also educate their people and organisation in the moral component of fighting power. This education needs to be more than just instilling virtues but should also 'aim at giving insight into the situational forces that make unethical conduct more likely to take place.'¹¹¹ Understanding the effects of situational influencers and common behaviours, holding themselves and their organisation accountable, displaying courageous leadership and ensuring their moral compass is true; all help the leader to be an ethical decision-maker. The S-CALM Model offers an excellent way for leaders to achieve ethical outcomes, for a deeper understanding read *The S-CALM Model: The Application of Ethical Leadership in the Military*.

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