

Monash

“Adopt as your fundamental creed that you equip yourself for life, not solely for your own benefit but for the benefit of the whole community”

The date was the 4th of July 1918, and the scene was set for a new era of warfare to be unleashed. After years of savage fighting, with unimaginative generals sending their troops to a senseless death in massed frontal attacks, the village of Hamel was about to witness the devastation of truly modern warfare thanks to Sir John Monash. Unburdened by the traditional thinking that plagued many generals throughout the war thanks to their archaic training, this mere civil engineer was able to see what others far more qualified couldn't; uniting tanks, aircraft, light infantry weapons and new communication methods in a show of force that signalled the nearing end for the Germans. This allowed for a battle that not only successfully captured the objectives, a rare occurrence in the war, but also preserved as many Australian lives as possible. The only failure was that it took 93 minutes, rather than the planned 90, to succeed. This rare ability to have a unique macro perspective and then have the planning skill to implement it made Monash, in the eyes of many, “the finest general of WW1”.

This action took place now over one hundred years ago, but the philosophy that drove it can still be readily applied to any situation today that influences other individuals. Monash's first priority was not the glory stemming from a monumental victory, but instead keeping his men safe. All of his tactics were then built around achieving this goal, resulting in a new mode of warfare that achieved both outcomes simultaneously. This came in direct contrast to Sir Douglas Haig, the commander of the British war effort on the Western Front, who throughout the war fantasised over a cavalry charge that would win the war, but more importantly, shower him with the glory of *his* branch of the military being responsible. Expectedly, this resulted in a stalemate, with his only solution once he realised that cavalry in a modern war was unfeasible being sending men to their death, reprimanding generals with small casualty lists for ‘not having a go’. When Monash proved that you could in fact have military success while having mothers see their sons again, there was a paradigm shift on the Western Front. Soon Allied attacks became more successful, and the offensive gained continual momentum until the eventual armistice on the 11th of November. The speed of the war shifting abruptly towards a flowing, mobile offensive overwhelmingly in the Allies favour can be traced back to that fateful day in Hamel, which directly shortened the war and saved lives.

The modern era too has ushered in a broad variety of technology that is often misunderstood. Just as Monash had tanks, aeroplanes and radio communication,

today society has blockchain, electric vehicles and artificial intelligence along with a myriad of other innovations. The confusion from this technology stems from nobody having a clear path towards mass utilisation. Yes, there are instances of solitary usage in projects, but there has been no individual who has been gifted with the ability to turn their visions into a physical reality. Innovation without implementation is useless. The world needs somebody who can embody the traits of Monash in the military in a contemporary setting, where they create an abstract connection between new technology's current and potential usage, then show an unrelenting persistence and eye to detail in bringing it to fruition. This creates a literal 'Brave New World', with a need for being open minded and being able to accept the disruption that flows from unleashing creativity. Leaders that are able to do this will be the future, leading the globe into a new paradigm with renewed growth and vigour.

The current geopolitical climate offers a situation that has some parallels to Monash's, with a newfound focus on national security and international stability, calling for elements of his philosophy to be studied and applied. In the face of 'the inevitable', whether that be war with China over Taiwan, or Russia employing nuclear weapons in Ukraine, whatever strategy employed by politicians should be to focus on the Australian communities' wellbeing. Anything else is a severe misappropriation of resources that will damage the life of Australian citizens. Just like Monash on the tactical level focused on the individual under his command, on a grander political level the exact same attitude is apt. When politicians consider the overall wellbeing of Australians over the short *and* long term rather than personal prestige, the nation's health increases alongside this. In the instance of dealing with the aggressive advances of China, Australian citizens have not faltered in standing up to them despite their overwhelming strength, instead choosing to favour long term world peace over individual fears of retribution. This creates a precedent that can be modelled by other nations globally, consolidating the stability Australia pioneered through calculated bravery.

An indispensable aspect of Monash's leadership was the coherent communication in units below him, whether they were from different countries or different branches of the military. Again, this is evident in his coup of Hamel, when, along with the Australians, he organised inexperienced American soldiers and tank units that his men severely mistrusted after past failures. In the modern era the imperative for international strength through alliances in the face of growing global tyranny is becoming evident. This is accelerating the already present trend of globalisation, as seen with NATO in standing against Russia as a united organisation. Despite international fears, they presented themselves as being able to cooperate, willing to agree on key issues and thus making themselves a far more formidable opponent rather than shattering as Putin expected. Australia presented themselves as being at the forefront of international matters through joining AUKUS, a pivotal development in national defence. Recent developments in this war have again reinforced the adroitness of this move, with the need for strength in the West against tyranny.

2- James Clarke

While policies implemented by the government must be Australian-centric, they cannot be formulated to act as if we are in a vacuum devoid of other countries. Politicians must contemplate how a policy impacts the international community on some level, trying to cultivate an environment that is both conducive to peace and trade. This was vividly displayed when Australia was at the forefront of an initiative to inquire into the causes of the global pandemic. Despite this causing China to retaliate by slamming the nation with tariffs and other methods of imperial protectionism, Australia held fast to their belief in international justice. This unfaltering pursuit of the truth and justice in the face of adversity has worked to add to Australia's positive international reputation. The short-term ramifications of this action, while hard to immediately justify, are necessary for the eventual benefits of a global community that is stabilised, devoid of rogue states with no fear of consequences for their actions.

The personal philosophy of Monash has left him ascribed as one of the greatest Australians in world history. Through all of his military actions he constantly strived to place his soldiers' safety at the forefront of his decisions, allowing him to pioneer a new style of warfare that created unprecedented results, viewing the battlefield as an engineering project that could be overcome with planning and efficiency. The modern era has seen the prudence in Monash's avant-garde attitude, with the rise of China and war in Ukraine greatly increasing the importance of securing Australia's security without sacrificing national integrity. While the eminence of Monash is impossible to replicate, his philosophy can be imitated, regardless of an individual's standing in society, allowing them to leave a lasting legacy on their community. As Monash proved in grandiose fashion, you are not defined by your past, but by your ability to persevere, act with courage and unerring selflessness.