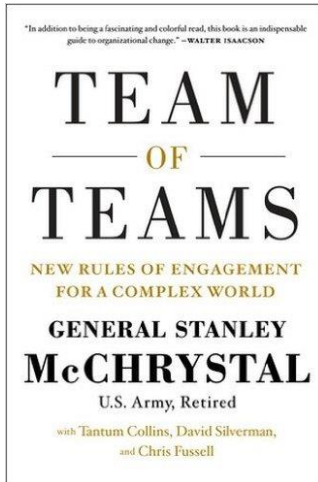*Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for A Complex World* by retired Army General Stanley McChrystal is a masterful discussion of how and why organizations with deep roots in Taylorism and in classic command-and-control must change if they are to survive let alone thrive. If there is a single key point that stands head and shoulders above the rest in my mind, it is this: The never-ending quest for *efficiency* must give way to a tireless effort to ensure *adaptability* and that, in turn, hinges on developing a team of teams. Each of the 12 chapters contains a bullet point list of key points at the end of the chapter. The 12 recaps are reproduced below[1]. Individually and collectively, much like the teams McChrystal writes about, they tell a fascinating story and they constitute a far better review than I could ever write. A link to the book on Amazon is provided on the left. Simply click on the image. The link is also provided at the end of this review.

Part 1 | The Proteus Problem

Chapter 1: Sons of Proteus

- The Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) that our Task Force confronted in 2004 looked on the surface like a traditional insurgency. *But under the surface it operated unlike anything we had seen before*. In place of a traditional hierarchy, it took the form of a dispersed network that proved devastatingly effective against our objectively more qualified force.
- AQI's unorthodox structure allowed it to thrive in an *operating environment that diverged radically from those we had traditionally faced: the twenty-first century is more connected, faster paced, and less predictable than previous eras. Though we encountered this shift on the battlefield, similar changes are affecting almost every sector of society*.
- To win we had to change. Surprisingly, that change was less about tactics or new technology than it was about the internal architecture and culture of our force – in other words, our approach to management.

Chapter 2: Clockwork

- Our Task Force's structure and culture of *disciplined, stratified reductionism* had its roots deep in military organizational history.
- This organizational culture is not unique to the military; since the Industrial Revolution, most industries have subscribed to management doctrines informed by or similar to Frederick Taylor's "Scientific Management," a system that is excellent for achieving *highly efficient execution of known, repeatable processes* at scale.

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[1] Three minor word changes have been made. Hyperefficient has been changed to hyper-efficient; commandlike has been changed to command-like, and holy grail has been changed to Holy Grail.

- We were realizing in 2004 that despite the success of this approach throughout the twentieth century, it had its limits. Like the Maginot Line, it was insufficient for tackling a new generation of threats. *Efficiency is no longer enough*.

Chapter 3: From Complicated to Complex

- The technological changes of recent decades have led to a more *interdependent* and *fast-paced* world. This creates a state of *complexity*.
- *Complexity* produces a fundamentally different situation from the *complicated* challenges of the past; complicated problems required great effort but ultimately yielded to prediction. Complexity means that, in spite of our increased abilities to track and measure, the world has become, in many ways, vastly *less predictable*.
- This *unpredictability* is *fundamentally incompatible with reductionist managerial models based around planning and prediction*. The new environment demands a new approach.

Chapter 4: Doing the Right Thing

- Prediction is not the only way to confront threats; developing resilience, learning how to reconfigure to confront the unknown, is a much more effective way to respond to a complex environment.
- Since the pursuit of efficiency can limit flexibility and resilience, the Task Force *would have to pivot away from seeing efficiency as the managerial Holy Grail*. To confront a constantly shifting threat in a complex setting, we would have to pursue adaptability.
- Our foe, AQI, appeared to achieve this adaptability by way of their networked structure, which could *organically reconfigure* with surprising agility and resilience. We realized that in order to prevail, our *Task Force would need to become a true network*.

Part II | From Many, One

Chapter 5: From Command to Team

- Fundamental structural differences separate commands from teams. The former is rooted in reductionist prediction, and very good at executing planned procedures efficiently. The latter is less efficient but much more adaptable.
- The connectivity of trust and purpose imbues teams with an ability to solve problems that could never be foreseen by a single manager – their solutions often emerge as the bottom-up result of interactions rather than top-down orders.
- In recent decades, teams have proliferated across domains previously dominated by commands in response to rising tactical complexity.
- The adaptability of the Task Force's team represented a valuable start, but we would have to build that same adaptability at a much greater scale.

Chapter 6: Team of Teams

- Although our Task Force's constituent teams exemplified adaptability, a command-like superstructure constrained the organization at large. This "command of teams" approach was more flexible than a conventional command, but was still not adaptable enough to deal with the complexities of the twenty-first century and battle AQI.
- Although teams have proliferated across many sectors, they have almost always done so in the confines of broader commands. More and more organizations will need to overcome this hurdle and become more adaptable.
- Unfortunately, many of the traits that made our teams so good also made it incredibly difficult to scale those traits across our organization. We were also up against some fundamental constraints. Building a single team the size of our Task Force would be impossible.
- The solution we devised was a "team of teams" – an organization within which the relationships between constituent teams resembled those between individuals on a single team: teams that had traditionally resided in separate silos would now have to become fused to one another via trust and purpose.

Part III | Sharing

Chapter 7: Seeing the System

- Like NASA before it, our Task Force found itself confronted with a *complex problem that demanded a systems approach to its solution; because of the interdependence of the operating environment, both organizations would need members to understand the entire, interconnected system, not just individual MECE[2] boxes on the org chart*.
- Harnessing the capability of the entire geographically dispersed organization meant *information sharing had to achieve levels of transparency entirely new* to both organizations.
- In traditional organizations, this constitutes culture change that does not come easily. It demanded *a disciplined effort to create shared consciousness*.

Chapter 8: Brains Out of the Footlocker

- Shared consciousness in an organization is *hindered or helped by physical spaces and established processes*. Often, efforts to facilitate Taylor-inspired efficiencies have produced *barriers to information sharing and the kind of systemic understanding we needed to pervade our Task Force*.
- Creating transparency and information sharing at the scale we needed required not only a redesign of our physical plant, but also a rethinking of almost every procedure in our organizational culture. The daily O&I briefing lay at the core of our transformation: this pumped information about the entire scope of our operations out to all members of the Task Force and partner agencies, and also offered everyone the chance to contribute.

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[2] MECE stands for "mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive."

Chapter 9: Beating the Prisoner's Dilemma

- *Cooperation across silos would be necessary for success*, and while systemic understanding was a valuable first step, we needed to build more trust if we were to achieve the fluid, team-like cooperation that we needed across our force; we had to overcome the challenge of the Prisoner's Dilemma.
- To this end, we used embedding and liaison programs to create *strong lateral ties* between our units, and with our partner organizations. Where systemic understanding mirrors the sense of "purpose" that bonds small teams, this mirrored the second ingredient to team formation: "trust."
- Together, these two elements completed the establishment of *shared consciousness*, something that was vital to our success. As is evidenced by the failures of GM and successes of Ford, the same innovations are sorely needed by many organizations still using rigid silos in an interdependent world.

Part IV | Letting Go

Chapter 10: Hands Off

- Traditionally, organizations have implemented as much control over subordinates as technology physically allowed.
- New technologies offer today's leaders unprecedented opportunities to gather information and direct operations, but because of the speed necessary to remain competitive, centralization of power now comes at great cost. While shared consciousness had helped us overcome the *interdependence* of the environment, *speed*, the second ingredient of complexity still posed a challenge.
- Effective adaptation to emerging threats and opportunities requires the *disciplined practice of empowered execution*. Individuals and teams closest to the problem, armed with unprecedented levels of insights from across the network, offer the best ability to decide and act decisively.

Chapter 11: Leading like a Gardener

- Although we intuitively know the world has changed, most leaders reflect a model and a leader development process that are sorely out of date. We often demand unrealistic levels of knowledge in leaders and force them into ineffective attempts to micromanage.
- The temptation to lead as *chess master, controlling each move of the organization, must give way to an approach as a gardener, enabling rather than directing*.
- A *gardening approach to leadership is anything but passive*. The leader acts as an "Eyes-On, Hands-Off" enabler who created and maintains an ecosystem in which the organization operates.

Part V | Looking Ahead

Chapter 12: Symmetries

- As our Task Force transformed itself, both our speed and precision improved dramatically. This was not a triumph of fine-tuning it into a hyper-efficient machine. *It had become a more transparent, more organic entity*.
- Technology had been both a cause of our challenge and a tool for our success. But it was the *culture change in the organization that allowed the Task Force to use it properly*.
- At the core of the Task Force's journey to adaptability lay a yin-and-yang symmetry of *shared consciousness*, achieved through strict, centralized forums for communication and extreme transparency, and *empowered execution*, which involved the decentralization of managerial authority. Together, these powered our Task Force; neither would suffice alone.
- Our transformation is reflective of the new generation of mental models we must adopt in order to make sense of the twenty-first century. If we do manage to embrace this change, we can unlock tremendous potential for human progress.

A link to McChrystal's book on Amazon.com is provided below. Simply click on the image.