

## Strategic Leader Evaluation Paper: George Washington

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Leadership is important for every organization. Particularly in a military organization, it means the survival of the country. Sun Tzu said that “Warfare is of greatest affair of the state, the basis of life and death, the way (Tao) to survival or extinction. It must be thoroughly pondered and analyzed.”<sup>1</sup> We know very well that we must have strategy to win the war. The military leader is the person who must have strategic leadership in order to implement the strategy to reach the goal. This essay will explain the strategic leadership by example from the great leader who is the father of the United States of America, George Washington. First, I will describe strategic leadership. Then, I will explain George Washington’s competencies, vision, and his traits in the level five leaders of Jim Collins.

We divide war into three levels: tactical, operation, and strategic. So, with leadership in the military, we can divide it into the same three levels. The US Army Field Manual 22-100 shows the perspectives of the three levels of leadership: *direct*, *organizational*, and *strategic*.<sup>2</sup> Strategic leaders are responsible for leading and influencing enormous numbers of people. This manual also shows that strategic leaders are generally responsible for large organizations and may influence several thousand to hundreds of thousands of people. As much as responsibility, it is about the competencies of strategic leaders that establish organizational structure, allocate resources, and communicate strategic vision. Strategic leaders work in an uncertain environment on highly complex problems that affect and are affected by events and organizations outside their own. Strategic leaders apply many of the same leadership skills and techniques they mastered as direct and organizational leaders; however, strategic leadership requires other skills and techniques that are more complex and indirectly applied.

For the Air Force Leadership Development Model<sup>3</sup>, it divides leaders into three levels. It explains the competencies of the leaders at the strategic level that airmen combine highly developed occupational and enduring competencies to apply broad professional leadership capabilities. They develop and integrate deep understanding of Air Force missions and how tactics, techniques,

<sup>1</sup> Ralph D. Sawyer, *Sun Tzu Art of War*, (Colorado, Westview Press, 1994): p.167.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.milum.net/strategic\\_leadership.htm](http://www.milum.net/strategic_leadership.htm)

<sup>3</sup> <http://leadership.au.af.mil/af/aftdm.htm>

procedures, technology, and people achieve synergistic results and desired effects, and also how the mission operates with interagency and multilateral relationships. At this level, an airman's required competencies transition from the integration of people with missions, to leading and directing exceptionally complex and multi-tiered operations. Based on a thorough understanding of themselves as leaders and followers, and how they apply organizational and team dynamics, they apply an in-depth understanding of leadership at the institutional and interagency levels. They achieve a highly developed, insightful understanding of personal and team leadership, while mastering their institutional leadership competencies.

George Washington demonstrated leadership competencies at the strategic level because he was the leader of the country on the battlefield as the colonies gained independence. He had to command and control tremendous numbers of soldiers. He was a strategic level thinker. His thinking was strategic thinking. He used his knowledge, experience, and his characteristics to lead his troops to fight against the powerful forces of the British Empire. On him was the responsibility for the survival of the newly declared country. If the country was to become independent, to fight off unfair British rule, Washington would be severely tested. These are the qualifications of strategic leader. The beginning of the cooperation between the American colonies to fight against the British Empire would not have been successful if there were no leader with high ability. George

Washington showed the competences of the leader at the strategic level. He had to lead his subordinates passed the difficulties because the vast area in each American colony was as large as some European countries, and each colony was set up independently. It was difficult for the colonists to work together because there were many opinions from the 13 colonies.

George Washington was a man who had earned the confidence and trust from them and American people. He led them to follow what he thought that would be the right path for the future of the American people. His troops lacked of capability for fighting, armaments, and training. They were volunteers. They were patriots. That was the only one advantage which American troops have more than the enemy. Improvement of his armed forces was the evidence to show his leadership at the strategic level. To win the war, the colonists must win in strategic level. With lack of the troops' capability, he had to improve that.

His experience that he was appointed to be an official surveyor made him have skills and expertise in the geography of the battlefield. It was useful for him to apply in planning and using the advantages of the geography to fight against the Britain. With his competencies from his knowledge and experiences, he could enhance morale the troops. He could motivate and inspire his troops. It made his followers believe and have faith in him. It made the troops which were on the weaker side able to beat the stronger enemy because of his strategic leadership.

About the leader's vision, the Strategic Leadership Primer 3<sup>rd</sup> edition points to the importance of vision that strategic leadership focuses on alignment, visioning, and change.<sup>4</sup> As well as that, it defines the meaning of vision as "*Vision is a leader-focused activity that gives a sense of identity, purpose, direction, and energy.* This process exists at many levels and in every type of organization; its content is the desired future of the organization. For that reason, vision adds value by providing the means for the enterprise to anticipate and move toward the future."<sup>5</sup> George Washington is a good example to show the vision of strategic leadership. Fighting alone against the powerful British Empire was not good way. More resources: men, money, materials and management were required if the struggle was to succeed. Washington sought the assistance from his allies. That was the good strategy. It increased his power and potential of the troops in fighting in the war. That was one important reason that the colonies eventually won the Revolutionary War. He used the strong point of American troops; they fought for independence, fought for freedom, fought for the better future. He could enhance the morale of his subordinates. They eventually fought for the country with greater enthusiasm than their ability would suggest.

Furthermore, Washington did not want to be the leader after the war ended. He went back home to be a farmer. He wanted the civilians to control

the military. That was great vision. It became the basis of the principle the country follows to this day. He wanted the country to be a democracy. He had a vision for the future of the country. He did not want to continue in his power. In addition, after being the American president in the first term for four years, he did not want to continue to be the president in the second term. He considered the situation of the country at that time. It was not yet in a stable condition. There were still the conflicts and some riots in many places. It was his accountability that helped to keep peace and create the security and stability of the country. So, he continued to be the president in the second term. He could do it very well. It made the need of American people want him to be the president again, but he rejected their wishes. He felt this was the good way to develop the country to be a democracy, to let the civilian government to control the military. This was the great vision of his that made the U.S. continue its use until now.

George Washington did not want to have power. He went back to his hometown to be a farmer after the Revolutionary War. He did not want to be the president in the second term and rejected continuing in the third term. He was not enchanted with power. Abraham Lincoln said about power that "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."<sup>6</sup> Napoleon was an example. He had power and needed it infinitely. He failed,

<sup>4</sup> Stephen J. Gerras, *Strategic Leadership Primer* (Department of Command, Leadership, and Management United States Army War College, 2010): p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*: p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> "Abraham Lincoln quotes", [http://www.coolquotes.com/quotes/abraham\\_lincoln.html](http://www.coolquotes.com/quotes/abraham_lincoln.html)

at last, because of the need of power. There are many cases nowadays in which the authoritarian leaders are expelled or arrested for punishment, Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, etc. George Washington showed the good vision and lack of enchantment with power two hundred years ago. While it made him a great leader, but many leaders in the recent time do not follow his good model. They eventually can no longer exist. George Washington had enormous troops, all of them wanted him to be a leader to rule the country, but with his vision and his characteristic that was not as ambitious as he declined the offer to his loyal soldiers. He was the person who originated the freedom of Americans. He founded the regime of the United States of America.

George Washington was not just the first president of the United States, but he was also the first American Revolution commander of troops in the War of Independence and as a statesman, leader, and commander of the state to escape from a critical juncture in safely reshaping the country. If it were not Washington's influence as leader of the military and the people's having faith in Washington, the country which just gained independence might have fallen into the outlaw state. If that had been the case, there would have been no opportunity to establish democracy as a model country for another free world to imitate as today. He might not be as intelligent as any other CEO who was very famous in the world.

In contrast, he was just an ordinary person who truly had the will, had the responsibility for his own mission, and who had done his duty to the best of his ability. He was an honest man. He was frankly and sincere. With these traits, he went ahead and ignored power or money. His strategic leadership ultimately enabled him to accomplish the great goal, and he became the father of the United States and the democratic regime that was used widely around the world.

From the level five leaders of Jim Collins, he explains the characteristics of this leader that the level five leaders embody a paradoxical mix of personal humility and professional will.<sup>7</sup> George Washington showed that he had these things. His ability in fighting from his knowledge, experience, and his vision lead the country to the better future. He had professional will to reach the goal by his competencies and vision. He had personal humility from leaving the power. He did so for the success of the unity not for himself. His characteristic was ambitious, not for himself but for the institution, which stated in the Strategic Leadership Primer 3<sup>rd</sup> edition which says about the level five leaders of Jim Collins, "It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious-but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves."<sup>8</sup> George Washington went back to his hometown to be a farmer after the Revolution War and subsequently rejected becoming president for a third term.

<sup>7</sup> Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2001): p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen J. Gerras, *Strategic Leadership Primer* (Department of Command, Leadership, and Management United States Army War College, 2010): p. 66.

These were the real characteristics of the level five leaders.

In conclusion, strategic leadership is important for every organization, particularly so for the military. Strategic leadership means the security and survival of the country. Strategic leaders think at a strategic level, which requires having vision that connects to operational and tactical levels. The vision must be ready to face the new challenge in the new world which changes rapidly. Their competences can serve the vision to reach the goal. In addition, at the same time they have personal humility. Strategic leaders are the persons who have professional will and personal humility. George Washington is the good example for strategic leadership. His traits of leadership are knowledge, experiences, and vision. He could enhance the morale of the troops, as well as motivate and inspire them. These show his

professional will. He was ambitious, not for himself but for the greater institution. It shows his personal humility. He is an example for the good leader to become the great leader.

If there had been no man named George Washington, there may have been no United States in the world today. The world may not be the world as we see it today. If there had been no U.S. to help the allies fight in World War II, Germany and Japan may have won the war at that time. We can think of that a person who helped form a country that would defeat Germany and Japan each time we look at a dollar bill. George Washington looks back wisely at us and smiles.

