

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**GEORGE C. MARSHALL: THE ESSENTIAL STRATEGIC LEADER**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The complexity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century operational environment, Global War on Terrorism, and on-going Army transformation, requires more of Army leaders at all levels. One can apply lessons learned from General George C. Marshall's career when developing today's leadership programs. George Marshall had unique foreign, domestic, and wartime experiences from his commissioning to his final military assignment as Army Chief of Staff. General Marshall displayed certain talents and abilities that allowed him to function with, be accepted by, and finally be chosen by national civilian authority for service as Secretary of State. These attributes, elements of character, and calculated uses of the strategic art enabled the creation or expansion of skills that facilitated strategic leadership at an unprecedented scale. This paper examines Marshall's character, education, experiences, and decisions; then coordinates those experiences with selected Pentathlete skills and metacompetencies forming strategic leader essentials. Finally, cultural adjustments, institutional changes, professional education, and self-awareness recommendations were suggested to improve leadership development for contemporary officer leaders in the Army.



## GEORGE C. MARSHALL: THE ESSENTIAL STRATEGIC LEADER

Growing competent, adaptive and self-aware leaders, comprising the Army warrior culture, is essential to instill a culture of innovation in the Army. These leaders are the centerpieces of a campaign-quality Army with a joint and expeditionary mindset.

—The Army Plan, 2006-2023

### The Strategic Environment

The complexity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century security environment requires more of Army leaders at all levels.<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 terror attacks and our entrance into the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), the Department of Defense's (DoD) understanding of the nature of the war and the nature of the enemy continues to mature and evolve.<sup>2</sup> Due to the GWOT being executed in an extremely volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, leaders are facing adversity at an unprecedented tempo. As a result of these challenges, and the ongoing Army transformation efforts, Army leaders are the intellectual cornerstones to accomplish the immense tasks before us. Leaders in the post-Cold War era must be more adaptive, self-aware and possess a greater breadth of knowledge in order to fully understand and implement the vision in the 2006 Army Game Plan:

The Army Vision is to remain the preeminent landpower on Earth – the ultimate instrument of national resolve – that is both ready to meet and relevant to the challenges of the dangerous and complex 21<sup>st</sup> century security environment.<sup>3</sup>

Since the beginning of Army transformation efforts in the late 1990s, and debatable “success” in Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Army has championed multiple studies to find the ways and means to inculcate officers with the necessary experiences, attributes, competencies, and strategic artistry to make it possible for the Army to succeed in its current challenges.<sup>4</sup> In the past, the Army placed greater emphasis on the transformation of *structures and systems* such as development of the modular force, base re-alignment, and Future Combat Systems (FCS) rather than intellectual growth, multi-faceted development, and affording appropriate experience levels of *leaders* that will influence the changing Army.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to analyze a successful strategic leader of the past, in this case that leader is General George C. Marshall. The author will apply his training and experiences to today's emerging military leadership framework, and assess if the Army's multiple studies provide sound recommendations that can effectively transform leader development.

To the Army's credit, unlike World War I and World War II, the Army War College (AWC) has remained open and continues to provide professional military education to leaders while

engaged in a long war.<sup>6</sup> The 2001 ATLDP study found that the Army must maintain its values-based leadership foundation and continue to provide research-based opportunities to study successful leaders of past and present.<sup>7</sup> The panel also recognized that the Army was developing a strategy-based method to enable lifelong learning through enduring competencies of self-awareness and adaptability.<sup>8</sup> To further clarify adaptability, University of Southern California Business Professor Warren Bennis describes adaptability as the capacity that allows leaders to respond quickly and intelligently to relentless change and notes adaptive capacity as a key competency for leaders.<sup>9</sup> The recognition of the need for these new skills has driven changes in Army leadership development for the contemporary operating environment (COE).

The 2006 RAND study, *Something Old, Something New* described the challenges of the COE for today's U.S. military operations as:

...Then came the onset of international terrorism directed against the United States, culminating in the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> and followed by conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Simultaneously, progress of globalization, making it easier for adversaries and terrorists to acquire and distribute information, other technologies, move weapons, and involve foreign civilian populations in war. These changes have created a dynamic situation – volatile, unpredictable, and novel in many respects. For military planners and leaders, the face of war is certainly more complex and varied than any time in memory.<sup>10</sup>

The 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) operationalized the 2005 *National Defense Strategy* and shifted the focus of its portfolio of military capabilities toward the middle of the diagram below to address the numerous pressures to the nation and its interests. The inter-related challenges below illustrate the threats that senior leaders identified as among the most pressing problems the DoD must address.

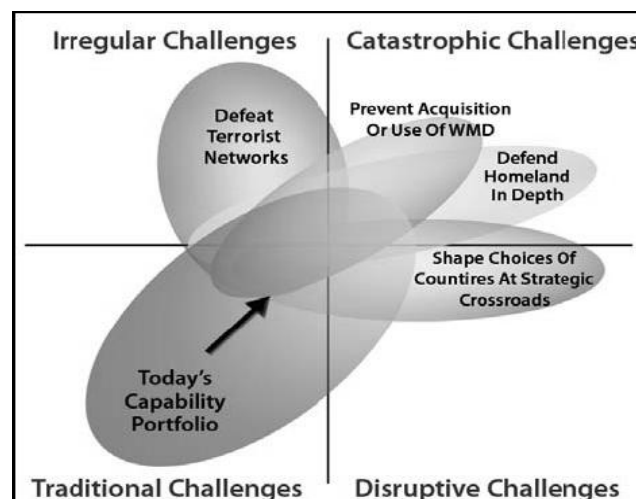


Figure 1: Operationalized National Defense Strategy<sup>11</sup>

In a further illustration of the need for this shift in priorities for the DoD in U.S. national security, strategic analyst Thomas Barnett noted the terrorist attacks of 9/11 revealed the yawning gap between the military the United States built to win the Cold War and the different one we *need* to build in order to secure globalization's ultimate goal – the end of war as we know it.<sup>12</sup> Barnett also identified the effect of our Cold War victory and expanding globalization by differentiating the *Functioning Core* of regions and the adjacent *Non-Integrating Gap* that contains the other regions (Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Middle East, and much of Southeast Asia) where connectivity remains thin or absent.<sup>13</sup> These non-integrating regions fall into the disruptive challenge area shown in Figure 1 and illustrate where a country was losing out to globalization or rejecting much of its cultural contents.<sup>14</sup> Thus, much of the world's population in the non-integrating gap could eventually need assistance from the United States when at strategic crossroads to meet the needs of their citizens, and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system. U.S. political and military leadership will continue to be tested in their efforts to work with international partners to build and sustain democratic and well-governed states in keeping with the President's vision in *The National Security Strategy*.<sup>15</sup>

## History

Through studying history and the lives of highly effective military leaders, one can glean insights from their experiences and legacies in order to make sense of today's often novel and certainly complex COE. The study of those experiences and developmental stages, as well as comparing them to the desired outcomes of today's officers, can be a mechanism for preparing leaders to fulfill the Army vision and meet the numerous challenges the military will face in an unknown future.

On September 1, 1939 George C. Marshall took an oath as permanent Major General and Chief of Staff of the Army.<sup>16</sup> Coincidentally, it was also the date that Nazi Germany invaded Poland and began the struggle of World War II. For the next twelve years, George C. Marshall would face continual challenges, as a strategic leader, with top-level military and political problems of fighting the war and keeping the peace.<sup>17</sup> After the war, Marshall continued to serve his country as special emissary to China, Secretary of State, President of the American Red Cross, and finally Secretary of Defense.<sup>18</sup> Marshall's development as an officer and leader was an accumulation of his upbringing, education, military training, and experiences in United States and overseas assignments. His crucible event was World War I, and he gained valuable experience in the interwar years that enabled him to become the *Pentathlete* leader the Army now needs to fight and win in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Marshall possessed a unique history and

uncommon combination of experiences, skills, and character traits in his career that should be analyzed to provide insight into his exceptional performance. These insights can assist in evaluations of the Army's leadership developmental strategies and make further recommendations for change. Marshall's history and development will be the vehicle to identify the most important combination of *Pentathlete* skills and metacompetencies to develop leaders for the COE.

### The Pentathlete

To bring about the Army vision, and succeed in the face of the complex external environment, the senior Army leadership realized that we must develop leaders with enhanced qualities.<sup>19</sup> The "*Pentathlete*" is a metaphor for the multi-skilled leader the Army requires. These officers must possess versatility and athleticism that will allow them to learn and adapt to ambiguous situations in a constantly changing environment.<sup>20</sup> New Army leaders must be intellectually agile, and personify the warrior ethos from all aspects of war fighting to statesmanship to enterprise management and beyond.<sup>21</sup>

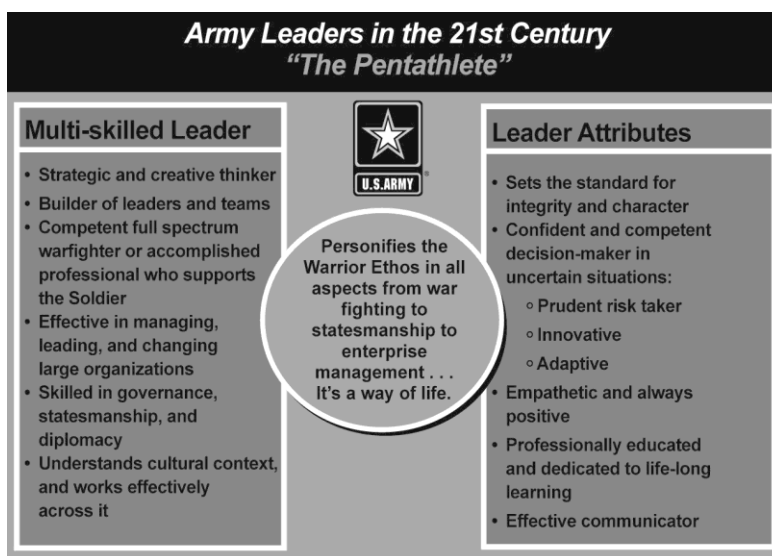


Figure 2: The Pentathlete Construct<sup>22</sup>

In July 2005, the Department of the Army (HQDA) established the Review of Education, Training, and Assignments for Leaders Task Force (RETAL TF) to answer a central question: "How should the Army develop its military and civilian leaders, who will serve in both operational and institutional capacities, to become *Pentathletes*...?"<sup>23</sup> One finding of the RETAL officer task force was that an officer's career path is often narrow and precludes the development of skills needed in the non-lethal spectrum.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the current culture discourages experiences



outside of the traditional career track.<sup>25</sup> To provide perspective on the importance of a leader's experience, Professor Bennis suggests leaders must "...consciously seek the kinds of experiences in the present that will improve and enlarge you."<sup>26</sup>

### Metacompetencies

To complement the *Pentathlete* concept, the author will also link key strategic leadership metacompetencies to Marshall's development. The concept of metacompetencies are used to reduce the numerous *FM 22-100 (now FM 6-22) Army Leadership* strategic leader and core competencies down to a more realistic aiming point for leader development efforts.<sup>27</sup> When one examines *Army Leadership* or any other leadership publication, the lists of skills and attributes seem endless. At the individual level, it is difficult to assess one's leadership ability when the lists suggest that the leader must be, know and do almost everything.<sup>28</sup> Hence, reducing the lists to a few metacompetencies will prove useful in: 1) directing strategic leader development efforts, and 2) facilitating self-assessment by officers of their strategic leader capability. Applying metacompetencies is an effective way to establish the effort to produce leaders with strategic leader capability, and facilitate self-assessments akin to a personal "azimuth check."<sup>29</sup> An AWC study group derived the following six metacompetencies: ***identity, mental agility, cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity, world-class warrior, and professional astuteness.***<sup>30</sup> Of the six metacompetencies shown above, the author will highlight three essentials that will be paired with three essential *Pentathlete* skills in Figure 2 to analyze Marshall's development as a model leader.

### Strategic Leader Essentials

How did George Marshall develop the skills and abilities that set him ahead of his peers and enabled him to become, perhaps, the most significant strategic leader of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century? This is the lens which will be used to examine three essential *Pentathlete* skills and three essential AWC metacompetencies deemed most appropriate by the author for today's strategic leaders. By using Marshall's past performance as a guide, one can obtain a sharper image of the aiming points required to create or expand skills that can facilitate improved strategic leadership. Figure 3 below portrays the six *strategic leader essentials* and source as either a *Pentathlete* skill or metacompetency.

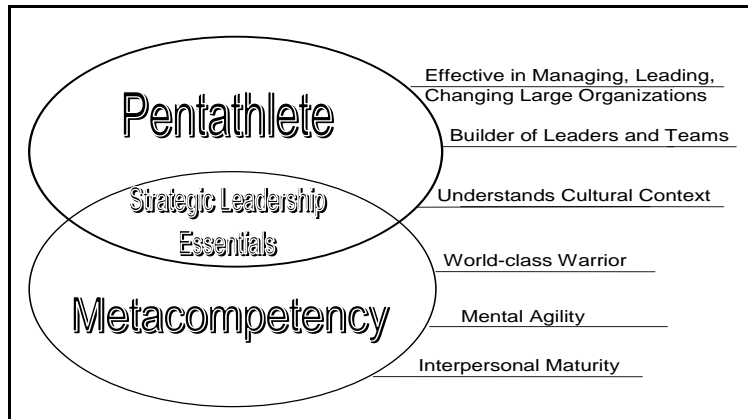


Figure 3: The Six Strategic Leader Essentials

### Marshall's Early Development as an Officer

It was at Virginia Military Institute (VMI) that Marshall began to make his mark.<sup>31</sup> Although Marshall was an average performer in academics, he excelled in the art of leadership, character, and was a model cadet. Driven by the desire for an army commission, he built upon childhood traits to succeed in a tough environment and developed additional strengths as needed.<sup>32</sup> Shyness was transformed into coolness and austerity; stoicism and hard work translated into an intense military bearing.<sup>33</sup> The result was a new found charisma, a leader among leaders, and a unique character marked by austerity and discipline that finally gave young Marshall the respect he wanted from his peers and superiors.<sup>34</sup>

Marshall gained his commission in the Infantry, and between 1902 and 1916, the ambitious George Marshall would serve in a series of military assignments overseas in The Philippines and in China, and in the United States.<sup>35</sup> Based on his high performance and talent, Marshall would often hold responsibilities well beyond his rank. In 1916, Marshall would serve in World War I and encounter his crucible experience as a planner and leader. In the interwar years, Marshall would gain further skills as a student and instructor at the General Service Course at Fort Leavenworth, as well as a myriad of staff and command assignments that would provide him with a unique background.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the key ingredient to his development during the interwar years was his work with civilians, the National Guard, the Infantry School, and in the bureaucracy of Washington D.C. In total, Marshall's history demonstrates the six *strategic leadership essentials* needed by officers in today's COE.

## Marshall Exhibits Strategic Leadership Essentials

### Mental Agility

From a cognitive perspective, mentally agile leaders learn how to scan the environment, understand their world from a systems perspective, and translate complex situations into simple, meaningful explanations.<sup>37</sup> Mentally agile leaders will utilize their keen assessments of the environment to positively alter the processes, structure, and behaviors of their organizations while analyzing second- and third-order consequences of their decisions.<sup>38</sup> From the first day of his arrival in the Philippines in 1902, Second Lieutenant Marshall was instantly the ranking officer of his infantry company and “virtually the governor” of southern Mindoro Island.<sup>39</sup> It was in this assignment with the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment that he learned about foreign occupation problems and learned to effectively lead and function in a completely alien environment. This challenging assignment provided Marshall with the first test of his *mental agility*.

George Marshall returned to the United States in 1903. He held multiple officer positions in the American West, engaged with Cheyenne Indians, leading mapping expeditions, and serving in a rapidly changing Army.<sup>40</sup> Marshall showed his mental talents for the new arenas emerging in the changing Army, most notably staff work and relations with civilians, and he continued to show the ability to learn and adapt quickly to new environments.<sup>41</sup> He also found that lack of proper planning and logistical support could ruin an isolated expedition, along with his mission. This hard learned insight would stick with Marshall throughout his entire career. In the Texas desert, his survey teams were often without food or water supplies and had to forage off the land or make purchases that were often questioned by higher headquarters.<sup>42</sup> These valuable experiences which challenged his *mental agility* are closely related to the *Pentathlete* skill of *understanding cultural context*.

### Understands Cultural Context

While cross-cultural skills have been desirable in the past, they will be even more critical now due to globalization and increased interaction with other nations.<sup>43</sup> Strategic leaders must operate in a culturally diverse environment, which includes understanding civil-political issues, interservice cultures, economic, religious, interagency, and international differences.<sup>44</sup> In his first assignment, Marshall worked with indigenous Philippine civilian leadership, and tackled the cultural challenge of interaction with multiple native tribes.<sup>45</sup> In 1924, he was assigned as Executive Officer in the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment located in Tientsin, China. The unit mission was to protect the lives and interests of non-Chinese citizens in the area and to ensure the Nationalist conflicts did not affect foreign concessions within the city.<sup>46</sup> The ambiguous nature

of his mission and civil-political ramifications provided Marshall with more experience in complex, foreign situations. He quickly adapted to the Chinese culture and learned the language well enough to testify in court.<sup>47</sup> Consequently his *understanding of cultural context* and *mental agility* were tested again in a forward area.

*Understanding cultural context* includes working with interservice agencies and civilians. Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the background of George Marshall was his extensive experience with, and obvious understanding of civilians and the National Guard. Marshall's success as a student at Fort Leavenworth brought the attention of Army Chief of Staff General J. Franklin Bell.<sup>48</sup> Bell recommended Marshall for a temporary assignment as an instructor to the Pennsylvania National Guard. Marshall was such a success as an instructor, and at getting the guardsmen to work together, that he was invited back the next summer. Even while in battalion and subsequently regimental command, Marshall spent much of his time working with the National Guard, the local civilian community, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).<sup>49</sup> The local citizens were surprised to see such involvement by a Regular Army Officer as much of their experience was with officers who preferred to remain isolated.<sup>50</sup> Marshall's cultural skills built upon one of his key strengths as a leader, his *interpersonal maturity*.

#### Interpersonal Maturity

Strategic leaders must possess an *interpersonal maturity* to utilize a diffused power relationship when dealing with individuals and groups from outside entities.<sup>51</sup> An interpersonally mature leader needs to be persuasive and must learn to *ask* others to commit to the mission rather than *telling* them. Additionally, due to the complex power relationships in this context, leaders must be able to build consensus and learn the art of negotiation. In Jim Collins' monograph *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, this type of diffuse power relationship is further defined as executive and legislative leadership.<sup>52</sup> In executive leadership, the individual leader has enough concentrated power to simply make the decisions.<sup>53</sup> With legislative power, however, no individual leader – not even the nominal chief executive – has enough structural power to solely make the most important decisions.<sup>54</sup> Legislative leadership relies more on persuasion, political currency, and shared interests to create conditions for the right decisions to happen.<sup>55</sup> Because of the complex COE and interaction with multinational partners and interagency, one must be able to utilize legislative leadership to effectively ensure unity of effort in complex missions.

Marshall's background working with foreign cultures and intergovernmental agencies enabled him to develop and utilize legislative leadership abilities based on his *interpersonal maturity*. While a student at Fort Leavenworth, he was unanimously selected by the academic boards to teach engineering and military art at the General Service Course.<sup>56</sup> As a junior First Lieutenant he needed special permission from the War Department to instruct officers of higher rank. General Bell, who was so impressed with his work with the National Guard, personally approved the request and Marshall then taught military art to Captains and Majors.<sup>57</sup> Again, Marshall excelled at teaching and dealing with Regular Army officers, National Guard officers and civilians. His method and style was to direct men by trying to make them "see the way to go" and utilize a legislative style of leadership.<sup>58</sup> Marshall also had to practice persuasion and consensus building when training the National Guard. He had no directive power, yet organized regimental sized maneuvers in restrictive areas, with very limited time.<sup>59</sup> It was also during this period that Marshall further built "habits of thought," "learned how to learn," and absorbed material concerned with the relationship between politics and the military.<sup>60</sup> He studied the Clausewitzian remarkable trinity,<sup>61</sup> history, logistics, and learned the inextricable linkage and subordination of war to politics.<sup>62</sup>

In the interwar years, Marshall continued to grow as a leader and continued to expand upon his knowledge with interpersonal skills and politics. Marshall relied on his sense of humor, negotiating skills, and professional poise to effectively communicate with multiple groups of stakeholders and win their respect and support.<sup>63</sup> He gained valuable political and civil-military experience in Washington and around the country as Army Chief of Staff General John Pershing's aide.<sup>64</sup> Marshall developed a close relationship with Pershing and learned much about listening, professionalism, and austerity.<sup>65</sup> Marshall also solidified his personal policy of being apolitical, possessing no "ulterior motives," and he chose not to vote.<sup>66</sup>

Marshall, as aide Pershing, had extended periods of time when he virtually ran the Chief of Staff's office. This provided him exclusive opportunities to serve on boards and committees while meeting influential political and business leaders. Marshall's leadership ability continued to be honed by his unique experiences, which further developed his skills in managing and leading large organizations.

#### Effective in Managing, Leading, Changing Large Organizations

Managing, and leading large organizations through change is a *Pentathlete* skill is critical for strategic leaders. Before his tenure as Army Chief of Staff, Marshall benefited from work in several venues where he was responsible for managing and changing large organizations, often

armed with only legislative power. Marshall did so well changing and guiding officers and National Guard units that he was permanently assigned to the Massachusetts National Guard. He presided over large exercises, often involving units from multiple states and maneuver areas of over more than three states. Due to the nature of National Guard summer training schedules, Marshall had to learn to operate with very limited planning time and an extremely short execution window.<sup>67</sup>

Marshall gained indispensable experience in managing and leading large organizations when he was assigned to the Eastern Department of the Army in New York. His mission was to oversee the mobilization and organization of the massive conscription force to be trained for service in Europe for World War I.<sup>68</sup> Marshall noted that the task of preparing the Eastern Force for deployment was “the most strenuous, hectic, and laborious of my (wartime) experience.”<sup>69</sup>

During his preparation of the Eastern Department of the Army, Captain Marshall was hand-picked to be in the first shipment of the U.S. First Division troops to arrive in France.<sup>70</sup> He would soon come face-to-face with the crucible event that would solidify his talents and showcase his abilities – World War I. To his horror, the First Division, as an organization, did not really exist.<sup>71</sup> To Marshall, planning was everything and once he arrived in France he found that he was in charge of just about every aspect of organizing, managing, leading, and changing the First Division for its upcoming role in combat.<sup>72</sup> As a Captain, he was the division’s chief of operations and was now required to organize plans for training and equipping soldiers who had a complete ignorance of their weapons, and for a unit that had never trained together.<sup>73</sup> The amount of soldier hardships due to leadership failures and politics would forever be burned into Marshall’s consciousness.

In 1932, he commanded a battalion and then a regiment from the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry at Fort Screven, Georgia.<sup>74</sup> Here Marshall continued to demonstrate his intense interest in the welfare of his men and his views on the importance of the citizen-soldier Army.<sup>75</sup> He took the lead in the organization, building, management, and logistical support of multiple CCC camps in his area – involving thousands of young men. Marshall noted that the CCC was “the greatest social experiment outside of Russia” and it was in this situation where he honed his skills in diplomacy, governance, persuasion, and team building.<sup>76</sup>

In his next assignment, Marshall gained further knowledge of civilians as the senior advisor of the troubled Illinois National Guard.<sup>77</sup> When Colonel Marshall came to the headquarters, he quickly began to establish order and discipline, leading by example while setting the standard for military correctness.<sup>78</sup> He demanded and portrayed intelligence, promptness and precision when needed, while also being reflective, expansive, and warm at

other times.<sup>79</sup> These are important traits when establishing the standard for integrity and character. Marshall likely knew that to change a poor organization multiple approaches were required to communicate his intent to the men. To this end, the 1950 version of *The Armed Forces Officer* notes “The winning of battles is the product of the winning of men;” in this case the battle was to improve the organization.<sup>80</sup>

### Builder of Leaders and Teams

Perhaps Marshall’s most satisfying accomplishment was the systematic and efficient training of men and units for combat. In 1927, Marshall was re-assigned to the United States from China and to a post where he may have had the most influence on the future leaders of the World War II era. Lieutenant Colonel Marshall was assigned to Fort Benning as the Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School. This assignment showcased his energies and talents as a team builder and Marshall found this assignment to be very fulfilling as the atmosphere at Fort Benning changed “magically.”<sup>81</sup> Once again, George Marshall exhibited skillfulness in handling people and required high standards of his students and staff. Marshall’s experience and knowledge from World War I served him well. He had learned how to make soldiers of the conscripts, and military units out of the collections of men.<sup>82</sup> From his wartime experiences in the First Division and AEF G-3, Marshall highly valued adaptability, simplicity, critical/creative thinking, and unorthodox approaches.

Marshall was also keenly aware of, and had an eye for, talented officers. While at Fort Benning, Marshall identified men such as Bradley, Collins, Ridgway, and others as potential leaders in the Army of the future. They demonstrated the essentials of battle leadership and showed unlimited potential.<sup>83</sup> Again, *The Armed Forces Officer* reflects that one must have merit in order to recognize it in others, and “The act of recognizing the worthwhile traits of another person is both the test and the making of character.”<sup>84</sup>

Marshall was promoted to brigadier general and given his last command billet; 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 3d Division in Washington.<sup>85</sup> Once again he worked with the CCC and managed the “human details” of command while letting his executive officer run the day-to-day operations of the brigade.<sup>86</sup> Marshall made it a point to get out of the office to increase his contact with his officers in the field and utilize his vast experience as a trainer to improve his unit.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, he fought against anything that distracted from taking care of the men and their proper training. He was aware that distractions could undermine unit cohesion and trust which were just the intangibles Marshall worked so hard to build within his unit.

## World-class Warrior

The *world-class warrior* understands the entire spectrum of operations at all levels.<sup>88</sup> Here, leaders understand joint, interagency, and multinational operations and the use of all elements of national power.<sup>89</sup> As a student at Fort Leavenworth, young Marshall understood the linkage of warfare to politics. During an extended staff ride of Civil War battlefields on horseback, he gave the final briefing of the year at Gettysburg on how General Lee's strategic invasion of the North was based more on politics than military reasons.<sup>90</sup>

During his second tour in the Philippines, Marshall again assumed responsibilities well beyond his rank and succeeded brilliantly. One example of this was as a First Lieutenant where Marshall directed a 5,000 man invasion force to test Luzon's defenses against external attack.<sup>91</sup> He was assigned as chief of staff for the invasion force and skillfully planned nearly every facet of the attack. After the exercise, Marshall was commended by the chief umpire for his adaptability and willingness to accept unusual responsibility for his rank<sup>92</sup>.

In World War I, Marshall was the indispensable staff officer and had the responsibility to plan the two largest American-led combat operations of the war: the Saint Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne offensives.<sup>93</sup> He succeeded in planning an operational, logistical, and allied coordination feat of unprecedented proportions. The allies caught the Germans by surprise, which led to their eventual surrender less than two months later.<sup>94</sup> Marshall subsequently reflected that a successful war effort did not simply depend on the tactical battle at the point of contact; rather he found that the operational and strategic management of resources, their timing and sufficient quantities positively affect the outcome of the battle.<sup>95</sup> In addition, Marshall's superior planning abilities, self-effacing and candid leadership, personal vow to support the soldier and determination to never again send an unprepared nation into a great war were fully engrained through the crucible of World War I.

As Brigade Commander, Marshall's involvement in his unit and his innovative and adaptive ways is exemplified by a 1938 experience one month before departing to the War Department for his next assignment. During divisional maneuvers, Marshall was in charge of the red force in a joint Regular Army – National Guard operation. He was given a numerically inferior force which was scripted to lose the battle. He utilized an unorthodox night attack to defeat a superior force. Most of the observing officers were harsh in their critique of the adaptive maneuver, however, the lead G-3 judge concluded that Marshall's approach was imaginative and based on World War I experience.<sup>96</sup> When Marshall's command ended, he was headed back to Washington, D.C. and to his destiny.



### Chief of Staff of the Army

Once Brigadier General Marshall arrived in Washington in 1938, his greatness in U.S. history cemented rather quickly from his tenure as chief of staff. Here he separated himself from all others by his preparation of the nation for its destiny in World War II, its defeat of the Axis Powers, and its emergence as a global superpower. Perhaps the most important qualities Marshall brought to Washington, which got him noticed by Congress, were his candor, character, and integrity. All his previous assignments and training solidified these values. He displayed these qualities through his apolitical nature,<sup>97</sup> self-effacement, and ability to "...go right straight down the road, to do what is best, and do it frankly and without evasion."<sup>98</sup> During his tenure as chief of staff Marshall utilized the skills and attributes gleaned through almost forty years of experience to lead the Army in World War II. Below are major accomplishments of George Marshall as presented by historian Mark Stoler linked to strategic leadership essentials:

- Personified the vision of professionalism, nonpartisanship, and integrity<sup>99</sup> (Interpersonal maturity)
- Planned and managed the modernization and expansion of the Army<sup>100</sup> (Managing, leading and changing large organizations)
- Persuasion of the President and Congress to maintain the draft and fund the build-up of the Army<sup>101</sup> (Interpersonal maturity)
- Placement and management of key officers in the Army<sup>102</sup> (Builder of leaders and teams)
- Facilitate building of foreign alliances<sup>103</sup> (Understands cultural context)
- Development of the Germany-first policy<sup>104</sup> (Mental agility)
- Development of Operation Overlord strategy, including information and deception plan<sup>105</sup> (World-class warrior)
- Development of occupation and rebuilding efforts<sup>106</sup> (Understands cultural context)

### Findings

George Marshall obviously displayed all the skills required of the modern *Pentathlete* and a strategic leader at the highest level of responsibility. As a strategic leader, Marshall provided "...strategic vision and focus, [was the] master of command and peer leadership skills, inspired others to think and act, and coordinated ends, ways, and means."<sup>107</sup>

What allowed George Marshall to obtain unanimous selection from a career Army officer to the Secretary of State? 1) Lack of "ulterior motives," and advocacy to do the right thing regardless of partisan opinion; 2) Experience in politics (as Pershing's aide in the 1920s and

with the National Guard); 3) Experience with civilians in general (CCC and the National Guard); 4) Unique combination of all the right things: self-discipline, knowledge, total honesty, and frankness.<sup>108</sup> It was perhaps his frankness, apolitical nature, and advocacy to do the right thing that made him stand out the most to politicians – including the president.

These examples of Marshall's character and sincere desire to protect the welfare of the country explain why two presidents asked him to serve significantly beyond his well deserved retirement date. Although his cohort of officers was vastly different from today's information based and network-centric cohort, the skills and attributes displayed by George Marshall can be emulated by today's officer corps and used as an example for leadership development. In addition, the author found that it was Marshall's staff and institutional positions forcing his development of legislative leadership, that most contributed to his growth as an officer and organizer of victory. While he excelled in his few command billets, his skills in legislative leadership that he developed as a staff officer, to include persuasion, diplomacy, organizational management, operations and logistics, and consensus building, set him apart from his peers.

The following are key items from the career of George Marshall that the author believes can be used as a foundation for leadership development programs, and are essential for building strategic leaders:

- Sound ethical and moral grounding to build solid integrity, frankness, and honesty
- Effective pre-commissioning training in the military arts and sciences, and officership; including history, foreign culture, language, and anthropology
- Effective mid-career training including military/political theory, logistics, historical case studies, statecraft, and environmental scanning methods<sup>109</sup>
- Effective leader feedback and mentoring
- Formalized staff rides as an integral part of leader development
- Increased number of cross-cultural assignments (fellowship, staff, instructor, foreign)
- Increased number of cross-component assignments (joint and reserve component)
- Civil-political interface (governance, business, statecraft, public administration)

### Recommendations to Improve Leader Development

The three major sources of Army recommendations to improve leader education and transition to a *Pentathlete* type leader development system are the ATDLP study, the RAND study, and RETAL TF report. This paper has already cited some of the findings and recommendations in the preceding paragraphs. The recommendations below are a synthesis of those studies and the opinion of the author. The recommendations are organized into three

categories: cultural adjustments, institutional changes, and professional education/self-awareness. The author feels these categories represent the major areas in which the Army could integrate strategic leader essentials into its officer development programs to produce effective senior leaders to function in the complex 21<sup>st</sup> century operational environment:

#### Cultural Adjustments

- 1) Inculcate and reward a values system that promotes integrity, honesty, frankness, and self-effacement. Promote these values in all officer schools by implicit and explicit means.
- 2) Current Army strategic leadership must emphasize officer bonding to the Army and joint operations vice individual branches.
- 3) Adjust Army culture to promote officers to seek opportunities to serve in branch immaterial assignments that build non-lethal skills (recruiting, instructing, logistics, plans, military attaché, inspector general, policy teams).
- 4) Provide education on theories of war and its relationship to politics and statecraft early in an officer's career.
- 5) Seriously attack Army redundancy, non-mission related compliance training, and the undisciplined operational pace to give leaders more time to focus on critical items and to reduce frustration.
- 6) Link leadership and training with the same priority; fund and formally evaluate success accordingly. Formalize periodic continuing education units for officers, similar to other professionals (doctors, lawyers) in practice.

#### Institutional Changes

- 7) Adjust Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and United States Military Academy (USMA) Order of Merit List (OML) to provide incentive for cadets who show high academic achievement or major in subjects: History, Geography, Political Science, Government, and Anthropology. Emphasis includes gaining further skills in cross-cultural understanding and statecraft.
- 8) Create ROTC Foreign Immersion experience. Provides the best cadets the opportunity to gain cross-cultural appreciation and builds mental agility.
- 9) Create Leadership Development Assignment Panel. Initial look will be first assignment after the Captains Career Course (CCC). Intent should be to ensure the maximum number of officers get branch immaterial assignments. Emphasis on assignments with civilians, government agencies, and the reserve components.

- 10) Increase Advanced Civil School opportunities. Provide funds to encourage officers to Permanently Change Station (PCS) from home station to different university locations in the U.S. and abroad. Emphasize globally focused programs.
- 11) Create internships and/or fellowships that function in Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) realms. A by-product of the Leadership Development Panel, officers would spend six to twelve months as a “second” or “deputy” in positions supporting: multi-national corporations, defense contractors, key government/civilian posts, and the reserve components.
- 12) Continue the Army Chief of Staff initiative to grow the Army to provide more officer positions. The increase in positions would relieve some of the stress on the current force, allow for increased positions in the JIIM environment, and as instructors at schools as well as in the reserve component.

#### Professional Education and Self-awareness

- 13) Improve faculty selection at the Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) and CCC. These officers should have the right values and experiences to impart their knowledge and lead by example. The intent is to have the most experienced and multi-skilled officers teaching the future generation of officers.
- 14) Broaden BOLC and CCC curriculums to include statecraft, environmental scanning (PMESII), formalized staff rides, language training, anthropology, and historical civilian or military leadership case studies.
- 15) Formalize leadership feedback (360 degree evaluations) for all officers beginning at Intermediate Level Education (ILE). The results will be part of the officers’ files and part of the board process.
- 16) Change the Officer Evaluation Report (OER) to include senior leader counseling as a required entry on the form. Additionally, update and quantify the leadership attributes to reflect *strategic leader essentials*.

#### Conclusion

Today’s leadership is challenged by multiple threats postured throughout the world. From states in the non-integrating gap to irregular warfare and terrorism, the United States will continue to be faced by a complex and volatile COE. As the Army transforms its structures and systems to meet those challenges, it must also update and modify its leader development programs.

General George C. Marshall's distinctive mix of education and experience led to his development as possibly the greatest strategic leader of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Persons with command, staff, and institutional responsibilities would do well to study Marshall's strategic development. His unyielding character, and utilization of these six *strategic leader essentials*, helped him guide the country through multiple crises as the Army Chief of Staff and later as Secretary of State:

- Effective in managing, leading, changing large organizations
- Builder of leaders and teams
- Understands cultural context
- World-class warrior
- Mental agility
- Interpersonal maturity

Three categories of recommendations (cultural adjustments, institutional changes, and professional education/self-awareness) provide options to update leader development programs. To effectively change the culture and institutional process of leader development, the Army must make some tough choices regarding funding, expectations, and senior leader management. These programs must be adjusted to enable officers to guide the Army through transformation while simultaneously fighting the GWOT. The renovated leader development programs must provide officers the best opportunity to achieve the proper mix of education and experience to become a *Pentathlete* leader with *strategic leader essential* skills. As General Marshall guided the Army through World War II and beyond, senior leaders of tomorrow must have the proper tools to propel the Army through future challenges in our unpredictable world.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Francis J. Harvey and Peter J. Schoomaker, *2006 Army Posture Statement* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 2006), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Pace, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 1 February 2006), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Francis J. Harvey, Peter J. Schoomaker, and Kenneth O. Preston, *The 2006 Army Game Plan: Accelerating Momentum* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 1 May 2006), 2.

<sup>4</sup> There are four major studies that the Army is utilizing to analyze leader performance and development in the current strategic environment. These include the 2000-2001 Army Training and Leader Development Panel (ATLDP) Officer Study; 2004 USAWC Report on Leadership Lessons at Division Commander Level; 2006 RAND Study *Something Old, Something New*; and

finally the 2006 Review of Education, Training, and Assignment of Leaders Study (RETAL) which was recently approved for implementation.

<sup>5</sup> Henry A. Leonard et al., *Something Old, Something New: Army Leader Development in a Dynamic Environment* (The RAND Corporation, 2006), xiii.

<sup>6</sup> Harvey and Schoomaker, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Training and Leader Development Panel Study (ATLDP)*, (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 2000-2001), OS-3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), xxii.

<sup>10</sup> Leonard et al., 1.

<sup>11</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 6 February 2006), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 16 March 2006) 33.

<sup>16</sup> Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall – Education of a General* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Harvey, Schoomaker, and Preston, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Harvey and Schoomaker, 15.

<sup>23</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Report (RETAL)*, (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, November 2006), 3.

<sup>24</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Report (RETAL)(Appendix D: Officer Report*, (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, November 2006), 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Bennis, 91.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen A. Shambach, ed., *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2004), 58-59.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Stuart W. Husted, *George C. Marshall – Rubrics of Leadership* (U.S. Army War College Foundation, 2006), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Mark A. Stoler, *George C. Marshall – Soldier-Statesman of the American Century* (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1989), 2.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>36</sup> Pogue, 96.

<sup>37</sup> Shambach, 60.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>39</sup> Stoler, 17.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>42</sup> Pogue, 87-89.

<sup>43</sup> Shambach, 60.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Stoler, 17.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Shambach, 61.

<sup>52</sup> Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* (Boulder, CO: n.p., 2005), 10-11.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Pogue, 102.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>60</sup> Stoler, 23.

<sup>61</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 89. *The “remarkable trinity” is the description of war’s dominant tendencies and undeniable relationship between the people; the commander and his army; and the government.* The issue is to develop a strategy that maintains an acceptable balance between these three tendencies.

<sup>62</sup> Stoler, 23.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Stoler, 42.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Husted, 54.

<sup>73</sup> Stoler, 35-36.



<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 59. In fact, Marshall wished he could have been the National Director of the CCC.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Pogue, 285.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>80</sup> Department of Defense, *The Armed Forces Officer* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 1950), 87.

<sup>81</sup> Pogue, 248.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 248,269.

<sup>84</sup> *The Armed Forces Officer*, 84.

<sup>85</sup> Stoler, 61.

<sup>86</sup> Pogue, 303.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Shambach, 62.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>90</sup> Stoler, 23.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>92</sup> Pogue, 123.

<sup>93</sup> Jack Uldrich, *Soldier, Statesman, Peacemaker – Leadership Lessons from George C. Marshall* (New York: American Management Association, 2005), 124.

<sup>94</sup> Stoler, 40.

<sup>95</sup> Uldrich, 123.

<sup>96</sup> Pogue, 315-316.

<sup>97</sup> Richard Kohn, "Dealing with the Devil- Assertive Secretaries of Defense and how to Deal with Them," lecture, Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 6 December 2006. In describing *apolitical nature* - Dr. Richard Kohn, an expert on civil-military relations and

holder of the Omar Bradley Chair for Strategic Leadership at the AWC, gives advice to senior military leaders when working with high level civilians in a political environment: 1) Gain trust: No leaks, no games, and total openness; 2) Speak-up and insist on the right to give military advice, keep it confidential; 3) Do what is right from a moral perspective; 4) Resist pressure - tell the truth, and say it even if you think it will hurt your career; 5) Relationships between generals and politicians should be one of education, similar to an attorney – client.

<sup>98</sup> Uldrich, 46.

<sup>99</sup> Stoler, 77.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>107</sup> Shambach, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Stoler, 76-77.

<sup>109</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 17 September 2006), IV-4 – IV-5. An example of an environmental scanning methodology is the use of Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, and Infrastructure (PMESII). It portrays a systems analysis of the interconnected operational environment by identifying key nodes and links that can enhance understanding of the environment and influence operational design.