

# *A CGO Look at the Commander in Chief*

*1st Lt Tracey Richardson*

The peacetime manager is like a supply officer who is great at planning and logistics, tasks in which people work hard but no one gets hurt. In contrast, in wartime, leaders must be able to consider doing the unbearable. Wartime leadership is hard: it involves actions in which some will be injured and even die, in order for the group as a whole to live...Wartime leadership, therefore, requires a strength of character, self-discipline, courage, and deviance from what's popular that peacetime managers don't need...It is the job of leaders to inspire confidence in people who are racked by doubt. In wartime, when conditions are ambiguous and decisions are difficult, leaders must decide, choose, and act. They understand that when they don't act, they are perceived as being indecisive and weak, and this increases people's sense of anxiety, powerlessness, and insecurity. When others doubt a leader's ability, confidence, or effectiveness, the mission is sabotaged.

J. Bardwick (Hesselbein, 1996, p. 138)

In a chaotic world, we need leaders not bosses. We need leaders to help us develop the clear identity that lights the dark moments of confusion. We need leaders to support us as we learn how to live by our values. We need leaders to understand that we are best controlled by concepts that invite our participation, not policies and procedures that curtail our contribution.

M. Wheatley (1999, p. 131)

"Leadership involves persuading other people to set aside for a period of time their individual concerns and to pursue a common goal that is important for the responsibilities and welfare of a group (Hogan, 1994, p. 493)." "Of interest to scholars throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the trait approach was one of the first systematic attempts to study leadership. In the early 1900s, leadership traits were studied to determine what made certain people great leaders. The theories that were deployed were called "great man" theories because they focused on identifying the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great social, political, and military leaders (e.g., Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Mohandas Gandhi) (Northouse, 2001, p.15)." As a result of the 11 September 2001 tragedy, our president was forced to take a different role as Commander in Chief. George W. Bush has been directly involved with the nation in this time of despair. President Bush is being described by three traits he exhibits: self-confidence, courage, and charisma. The three traits will be defined according to leadership gurus, as exemplified by the President, and the implications of the President's actions discussed.

## **Self-Confidence**

According to Kouzes and Posner, "Successful leaders have high expectations, both of themselves and of their followers. These expectations are powerful, because they are frames into which people fit reality (Kouzes & Posner, 1987, p. 242)". A week and a

half after the terrorist attacks on New York City and the Pentagon, our President addressed the Joint Session of Congress. Self-confident is the most obvious word to describe him. He said "My fellow citizens, for the last nine days, the entire world has seen for itself the state of our Union - - and it is strong. Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemy, justice will be done (Bush, 2001, p. 1)". Because of the Commander in Chief's confidence in the nation, he inspired the American people to have confidence in their government and in the President to make difficult decisions about the future. George W. Bush rallied the support of both the house and Senate republicans and democrats in a time when unity was essential.

Alfred Decrane, in his article *A Constitutional Model of Leadership*, states that it is "self-confidence that makes it possible for leaders to be willing, prudent risk takers who encourage others to take similar risks. Leaders take responsible risks, risks that stack up appropriately with potential rewards (Hesselbein, 1996, p. 255)." President Bush demonstrated this type of self-confidence again during the 20 September 2001 address to the Joint Congress when he called out demands to the Taliban. The President ordered the Taliban release any American they are holding. He insisted the closing of all terrorist-training camps. The Commander in Chief concluded his requirements by stating, "These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate (Bush, 2001, p. 3)." By making these stipulations to the Taliban, our President set the tone for the future dealings with governments harboring terrorists. George W. Bush made demands that will require action if the United States is to be taken seriously. If the Taliban does not hand over the terrorists, war is inevitable. The President has confidence in himself and his nation.

## **Courage**

According to Bernstein and Smith, in their article *The Puzzles of Leadership*, courage is "the willingness to stand up for one's beliefs, challenge others, admit mistakes, and change one's behavior when necessary" (Hesselbein, 1996, p. 284). President Bush displayed true courage by bringing together politics and prayer. He called on every religious denomination to pray for our country. "Prayer has comforted us in sorrow, and will help strengthen us for the journey ahead (Bush, 2001, p. 6)." Our President called for the nation to give blood, donate to the relief fund, and volunteer. After the tragedy and under the leadership of our Commander in Chief, the United States has changed from a split country with selfish intent to a united nation giving and caring about neighbors, friends, and strangers.

George W. Bush's courage not only influenced a positive change in the United States, but a change in the World. Machiavelli stated "a man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grieve among so many who are not good. Therefore, it is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn how not to be good, and when to use his knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case (Machiavelli, chapt. 15)." During the October 7, 2001 Presidential Address to the Nation, our Commander in Chief said, "Today we focus on Afghanistan, but the battle is broader. Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murders, themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril (Bush, 2001, p. 4)." He also stated, "On my orders, the United States has begun strikes against the al Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (Bush, 2001, p.1)." Our President spoke these words to the nation from the White House Treaty Room, in the past used for peace, now seeking stability. By starting the war against terrorism, President Bush committed the lives of his military men and women. It took courage to start this war, as it is like no other war the U.S. has ever fought.

### **Charisma**

According to Webster's College Dictionary, charisma is "1. a special quality conferring extraordinary powers of leadership and the ability to inspire veneration (to regard with reverential respect; adore, revere, reverence, worship, (Webster, 1995, p. 804) 2. a personal magnetism that enables an individual to attract or influence people (Webster, 1995, p. 228)". Our President called out "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime (Bush, 2001, p. 4)." With this statement, our Commander in Chief had the potential to divide the globe. Early in the campaign against terrorism, many parts of the world questioned whether the Muslim faith would be under attack.

"Charismatic leaders possess a magnetic personality and engage in expressive behaviors with the intent of creating an image of competence and effectiveness. Charismatic leaders are able to evoke strong follower commitment to their vision and performance exceeding expectations (Deluga, 2001, p. 339)." George W. Bush rallied the Americans in support of the war. He said, "Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success (Bush, 2001, p. 4)". America followed him to war. A week after saying that, the President addressed the nation and said "We are joined in this operation by our staunch friend, Great

Britain. Other close friends, including Canada, Australia, Germany, and France, have pledged forces as the operation unfolds. More than 40 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and across Asia have granted air transit or landing rights. Many more have shared intelligence. We are supported by the collective will of the world (Bush, 2001, p. 1)". President Bush rallied support from strategic constituents all over the globe. Our Commander in Chief is not only leading America to war, he has the charisma to lead the world's effort to destroy terrorism and instill the freedom of the world to live, travel, and pursue happiness without fear.

As a result of the 11 September 2001 tragedy, our president was forced to take a different role as Commander in Chief. The President has been directly involved with the nation in this time of despair. President Bush is described by three traits he exhibits: self-confidence, courage, and charisma. The three traits are defined according to leadership gurus, as exemplified by President Bush, and discussed to the implication of the President's action. "These ideas speak with simple clarity to issues of effective leadership. They recall us to the power of simple governing principles: guiding visions, sincere values, org beliefs-the few self referential ideas individuals can use to shape their own behavior. The leader's task is first to embody these principles, and then to help the organization become the standard it has declared for itself. This work of leaders cannot be reversed, or either step ignored (Wheatley, 1999, p. 130)."

### **Reference Listing**

Bush, G. *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and American People*. Retrieved 12 October, 2001 from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

Bush, G. *Presidential Address to the Nation*. Retrieved 12 October, 2001 from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/print/20011007-8.html>.

Deluga, R. American Presidential Machiavellianism: Implications for Charismatic Leadership and Rated Performance. *Leadership Quarterly*, Fall 2001, 339-354.

Hesselbein, F., Goldsmith, M. & Beckhard, R. (Eds.) (1996). *The Leader of the Future*. New York: Jossey-Bass.

Hogan, R., Curphy, G. & Hogan, J. (1994). What We Know About Leadership: Effectiveness and Personality. *American Psychologist*, June 1994, 493-501.

Il principe. Translation of Niccolo Machiavelli's The Prince. Unknown translator. (Original completed in 1513.)

Kouzes, J. & Posner, P. (1987). *The Leadership Challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Northouse, P. (2001). *Leadership Theory and Practice*. (Second edition) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Webster's College Dictionary. (1995). New York: Random House Incorporated.

Wheatley M. (1999). *Leadership and the New Science*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.