



The Ethical Leadership of George C. Marshall

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Abstract

George Catlett Marshall's standing as an exemplar of public administration is abundantly supported both by his monumental achievements and by the ethical qualities of his organizational leadership. The purpose of this exemplar profile is to display his underappreciated record for the public administration discipline. There is much we can learn about the nature of ethical leadership and its relationship to public organizational effectiveness from this extraordinary man's leadership philosophy, managerial style, and organizational behavior and decisions.

Career soldier, genius of World War I battlefield organization and logistics, reformer of military education in the interim between the two world wars, leading advocate for military preparedness in the Roosevelt administration, reorganizer of the U.S. Army, organizer of both the American Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Allied coordination and command structure in World War II, head of a postwar diplomatic mission to China in the effort to prevent civil war, secretary of state and father of the Marshall Plan, president of the American Red Cross, and secretary of defense during the Korean War, George Catlett Marshall served his country in crucial leadership positions over a period of fifty years. He was one of the most successful public administrators in American history. Winston Churchill labeled him, justifiably, the "organizer of victory" in World War II (Pogue 1973, 585), and the Nobel prize committee referred to him as the "organizer of peace." In every role in which he served, he was renowned for his unflagging demonstration of personal virtue, strong moral character, and inspiring leadership.

Marshall was best known for his service as wartime chief of staff and as the guiding force in the formulation and enactment of the European Recovery Program (the "Marshall Plan"), but his service extended to other roles as well: diplomatic negotiator, advocate for war preparedness, educational innovator, government reorganizer. In all of these roles he was famously successful (with the sole exception of his attempt to negotiate a settlement between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists). It is tempting to intuit, along with Cooper and Wright (1992), Riccucci (1995),

Bellavita (1991), and Doig and Hargrove (1987), a strong causative relationship between exemplary character and the achievement of these goals. The purpose of the present exemplar profile is not to do this, but rather to examine in some detail the moral qualities associated with Marshall's particular practices, beliefs, and attitudes. Secondly, the intriguing possibility is suggested, but left for another time to pursue, that Marshall's moral sensibilities and ethics were causative factors in his monumentally successful leadership.

This article is fashioned to encourage theory development relative to moral exemplars along the lines undertaken by Cooper and Wright (1992). They combined the Harts' (1992) typology of "moral conduct" (including moral episodes and confrontations, and longer-term moral processes and moral work) with Alasdair MacIntyre's (1984) conceptualization of virtue based on "practices," defined as "coherent and complex forms of cooperative activity organized around the pursuit of certain goods that are internal to these activities" (Cooper and Wright 1992, 326). In doing so, Cooper and Wright persuasively argue that a good society requires moral exemplars, that the number of moral exemplars in public organizations is diminishing, and that it is incumbent upon us, as practitioners and academicians, to seek them out and to explain their worthiness and impact to students, lest we neglect the obligation to train new generations of public servants to understand their moral obligations (ibid. 9–29, 81). In their chapter, Hart and Hart stress the importance in government of moral character, which at its core involves "the voluntary acceptance of the moral obligation to use power *only* in the service of the public interest" (ibid., 89). They adopt a deontological perspective, although they assert, without attempting proof or argument, that "good character is positively related to organizational effectiveness" (ibid., 83).

In the essay that follows, the stage will be set by giving some background on Marshall's beginnings, his education, and his career achievements. The essay will then present a recitation of the personal attributes, practices, and beliefs that defined the moral core of his leadership style, including possible shortcomings. His views and influence upon some of the great moral issues of World War II, especially the use of the atomic bomb, European recovery, the civil war in China, and the cold war, will be highlighted. Finally, a concluding section will focus on the seeming contradiction of a moral exemplar who was both a champion of war and a champion of peace, and will speculate on the question of whether and how Marshall's moral qualities contributed to his effectiveness as a leader.

Beginnings, Education, and Achievements

George Catlett Marshall was born on the last day of 1880 in Uniontown, Pennsylvania.¹ His parents' family roots were in Kentucky and Virginia. His father came to Pennsylvania as a middle-class businessman to engage in the booming coal-processing industry. His maternal grandfather was an Episcopalian minister and a strong abolitionist, and George and his older brother and sister were raised in the faith. The family home was on the edge of Uniontown, a place situated on a creek with easy access to the surrounding town and country, of which the boy took much advantage. He was a reserved and shy but enterprising youth who with his friend secured a boat to ferry young girls across the stream on the way to and from school.

Marshall's father was a stern and somewhat distant man who did not allow his son to draw close—this was the province of his mother, who doted upon him and was a constant shield and protector. His love for the woman, her warmth, the security of her support, and his attraction to her grace and love of music were to affect his later choice of a mate and do much to explain the calm and serene self-confidence at the core of his nature. He did share with his father a love of history, and the two would visit the battlefields of the French and Indian War along the Cumberland Road close to town, and sometimes hunt and fish together.

George Marshall was a mediocre, even poor, student, except in the area of history. His tutored education was not strong. When he was a teenager his family experienced great financial losses, and as a result he had to attend public school, where he did somewhat better as a student. He tasted poverty and the humiliation of begging scraps of meat from the local butcher on behalf of the family, experiences that left him with a keen appreciation for the shepherding of scarce resources and his own dignity. His motivation to seek advanced education at Virginia Military Institute (VMI) came in part from the objection of his brother, Stuart, who had been a student at VMI, to George's being allowed to besmirch the family's reputation by attending the school. Mother interceded, father reluctantly assisted, and George's military career was launched.

At VMI from 1897 to 1901, George was from the very beginning the top cadet at the institution in military and disciplinary matters, although a mediocre student in classroom subjects other than history. He craved leadership roles and stoically put up with hazing, poor conditions, and a subpar education. Each year and at graduation, he was honored as the highest-rated cadet. He finally decided upon a military career after witnessing a parade of returning Spanish-American War veterans in his hometown. Exercising a boldness which was to characterize his career behavior, he went without an appointment to ask President McKinley to allow him to examine for Army officer. The timing was good, for a larger officer contingent was being retained because of the new role of America in the Philippines conquered from Spain, and his career commenced. His induction came virtually at the same time as his marriage to a young beauty, Lily Coles, whom he had been attracted to as a cadet by hearing her play the piano in her home just outside the VMI campus and pursued with determination.

Lieutenant Marshall served in the Philippines in many capacities in small units but did not see combat against the insurgent forces. He went on to a variety of posts in the next years before the World War, the most important of which was as a student and then instructor at the Army Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This assignment, he later said, was where his education truly began—he trained his memory, studied military history, and was exposed to the best minds in the Army. The earnest young officer became a favorite of General J. Franklin Bell, the commander of the college and a future chief of staff, who sent him to conduct National Guard exercises in various states. Marshall immediately took to the experimentation involved in setting up, conducting, and evaluating large troop exercises and was able

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When the United States entered World War I, Marshall sailed to France with the first contingents of the U.S. Army. He soon gained a singular reputation as a chief executive officer at the division, corps, and headquarters levels. Referred to as the “genius of logistics,” he was responsible for transferring a huge force (about 600,000 men) from the St. Mihiel front to the Meuse-Argonne front in the midst of a battle, without incident and without provoking the German army to redeploy in order to meet the new threat. Marshall’s reputation was made. After the war, General Pershing, the commander and hero of the American fighting forces in France, selected him as his principal aide. He served at Pershing’s side from 1919 to 1924, learning the politics of Army reorganization, experiencing the precipitous rush to demobilize, and continuing as right-hand man when Pershing became Army chief of staff.

Other, later aspects of Marshall’s career will be addressed in the balance of this essay. The outstanding passages, in terms of his growth and growing mastery of the administrative craft, included his tenure as assistant commandant of the Infantry Officer Training School at Fort Benning, Georgia, 1927–1932, where he revolutionized the nature of officer training and identified those officers most capable of innovation and problem-solving in nontraditional settings (thus setting a pattern so important for the success of the Army field forces in World War II), continued his work in preparing National Guard and reserve units for combat duty, embraced the concept and aided in the work of the New Deal’s Civilian Conservation Corps, and served a stint with the American military mission in Tianjin, China.

So much has been written about Marshall’s achievements that this aspect of his leadership will not be belabored. It is sufficient here to draw from *Time Magazine*’s explanation of why he was named “Man of the Year” for 1943. His job, *Time* (1944) said, “was to transform a second-rate army into the world’s most effective military power” in a relatively short time. Between September 1, 1939, the same day that Germany invaded Poland to begin World War II and Marshall, coincidentally, was sworn in as U.S. Army chief of staff, and the end of 1943, he was largely responsible for: building an ill-equipped army of 130,000 men into a well-equipped and superbly trained army of 8 million, struggling at first against the will of an isolationist Congress and a reluctant public, simultaneously holding off “hastily planned or ill-advised military operations,” designing and bringing about an integrated unified Allied command in every theater of war, resisting, under extreme pressure, “nervous demands of theater commanders” for green and half-equipped troops, recognizing “the importance of air power and push[ing] his airmen into bigger and ever bigger programs,” and breaking down “the traditionally supercilious war department enmity toward innovations of equipment.” He continued to oversee the total war effort until several months beyond the unconditional surrenders of Germany and Japan.

This extraordinary record of achievement covers only Marshall’s tenure as chief of staff (1939–1945). When his entire career is examined, many other achievements come to light, among them:

- his acknowledged genius as the Army’s leading executive officer in the logistics of World War I troop and supply movements and coordination with French and British forces at the front;

- championing the development of National Guard units into effective combat units;
- bringing about cooperation and coordination with America's allies before and during World War II;
- reorganizing the Army at the beginning of the war;
- creating the Joint Chiefs of Staff and effectively bridging interservice rivalries during the war;
- working tirelessly (and coming close to success) to negotiate a working relationship between Communists and Nationalists in postwar China;
- reorganizing the State Department in 1947–48;
- creating and securing passage of the Marshall Plan in 1947–48;
- consistently winning bipartisan congressional support for Roosevelt and Truman administration programs.
- leading the Defense Department during the Korean War;
- resuscitating the American Red Cross while serving as its president in 1948–49.

Any one of these achievements would by itself deserve prominent mention in American history. Taken together, they point to an administrative leadership capacity of such length and consistent excellence that it puts to serious challenge the popular hypothesis that leadership success is as much due to the fortunate concurrence of events and circumstances in the environment as to personal traits and behavior.

It is not the purpose of this essay to demonstrate Marshall's organizational achievement, which is widely acknowledged, uncontroversial, and heavily documented. Rather, the intent is to look into his character, practices, and beliefs to gain understanding of the personal attributes related to the ethical dimensions of his managerial and leadership style. Whether such attributes are related to achievements, and to what extent, is a subject left for another time and place.

Ethics and Attributes of Leadership

An exhaustive examination of Marshall's life and career, decisions, personal traits, and role-related behaviors may be found in the literature, mostly in biographical style (Acheson 1969; Barber 1997; Bland 1988; Cray 1990; Munday 2002; Pogue 1966, 1973, 1987; Pogue and Harrison 1963; Neustadt and May 1986, 247–256; Parrish 1989; Sherwood 1948; Stoler 1989). More insight may be obtained from recorded interviews with Marshall conducted by Forrest C. Pogue near the end of the general's life and well after his retirement (Bland 1992). Discovering Marshall's administrative philosophy and managerial style is more difficult. In this effort, the author has undertaken an exhaustive examination of Marshall's personal correspondence, collected and catalogued in the George C. Marshall Foundation Library in Lexington, Virginia.² From the observations of credible third parties who worked closely with him, and inferences drawn by the author from Marshall's letters, memoranda, and speeches, much is learned about what is referred to in this essay as his "attributes"—that is,

character traits and practices that had something to do with his administrative roles. The analysis will proceed by articulating a set of personal attributes generally recognized in the public administration and leadership literatures as related to organizational/ethical leadership, and simultaneously linking these attributes to observations of Marshall's behavior, practices, reasoning, and principles.

The set of leadership-related attributes was aggregated from a variety of sources, including scholars and organizational practitioners, among them Bailey (1965), Collins (2001), Cooper and Wright (1992), Denhardt (1993), Gibbon (2002), and Schubert (1960). The attributes so compiled are:

- personal courage;
- putting the public interest ahead of self-or narrow organizational interests;
- integrity and self-discipline;
- an organizational philosophy both task-centered and employee-centered;
- ability to recognize talent in others;
- exercising and demanding high ethical standards of organization members;
- understanding of and sensitivity to the political/social/economic environment;
- inclusiveness.

Other personal traits, although highly respected (and held in substantial measure by Marshall), are not clearly tied to leadership in the literature and therefore will be discussed only in passing as potentially related to effective ethical leadership. These include selflessness, calmness under pressure, compassion and humanity, accessibility, directness, and simplicity.

It is tempting to divide this list into two sublists, one comprising attributes related to ethical and normative matters, and the other made up of variables related to nonethical, cognitive matters and rational decision-making, and to treat only the former here. Alas, the exercise would not be realistic. Ethical norms, upon closer analysis, pervade almost all decisional and behavioral matters, however "rational" and "non-normative" they may appear upon preliminary examination. Ethical leadership traits are not separable from leadership traits in general. This is especially true of decision-making at the top policy levels of government. Such traits as ability to coordinate disparate activities, communicating broadly (downward, upward, laterally), a penchant for thinking ahead, and good interpersonal relations may be thought of as nonethical at first blush, but as an analytical reality they are intertwined with the leader's ethics. This is so for at least two reasons.

First, the ethics of professionalism and management ethics both encompass such traits as preparation, knowledge acquisition and continuing education, persistence, thoroughness, and follow-through. Even if the tasks are purely technical, the acts of becoming competent and expert and of being well prepared and thorough in the execution of activities until satisfactory results are obtained are ethical obligations of any professional. Furthermore, if public management is a profession, then all the elements of good management may be defined as ethical obligations in the professional management field.

Second, hidden in the planning and execution of such outwardly rational functions as budgeting, acquiring human resources, and coordinating the activities of different units of an organization are normative values and ethical precepts. For example, budgeting may be done openly and transparently *or* secretly; hiring people may take into account diversity and tolerance of conflicting worldviews *or*, conversely, the values of homogeneity and obedience to authority; coordinating organizational units may utilize sharing and consensus *or* be accomplished through a unilateral hierarchical decision, and so on.

Exceptional Courage

First among the qualities of ethical leadership is courage (Bailey 1965). Courage is needed to face down pressures based on friendship or popular majorities or expert opinion. There are many examples of Marshall's courage throughout his career. For instance, when Marshall, a young major serving as chief of operations of the 1st Army Division in France in World War I, met for the first time with General Pershing, commander in chief of the American Expeditionary Force, he spontaneously and vigorously defended his divisional commander against what he thought was an unfair criticism by Pershing. Colleagues witnessing the outburst thought Marshall had committed career suicide, but Pershing so appreciated Marshall's honesty and courage that he thereafter sought him out for consultation and later brought him to Paris to serve on his staff, and after the war made Marshall his chief aide. Another example occurred when Marshall attended his first meeting at the White House as deputy chief of staff in 1938. President Roosevelt laid out his ideas about concentrating aid to Britain and France in the form of airplanes. After everyone else in attendance, all superior in rank to Marshall, had agreed with FDR, the president turned to Marshall for his opinion. Marshall told him he did not agree and gave his reasons. Startled, Roosevelt terminated the meeting. Similar stories are common in Marshall's dealings with superior officers and heads of state (Stoler 1989).

As suggested by these incidents, not at all atypical, Marshall's temper occasionally imperiled his career. There is an inherent tension between courage and losing one's poise by getting exercised over an issue not at the heart of pursuing an important objective. Marshall himself recognized this, and believed that toning down his temper was an urgent need, but he was always outspoken on matters of principle and defending central goals. By the time he faced difficult negotiations with Zhou En-lai and Chiang Kai-shek in the futile attempt to find an accommodation between the Communists and Nationalists in 1946–47, and later in 1947 with the intractable and unreasonable Soviet foreign minister, Viacheslav Molotov, in the attempt to reach agreement over a German and Austrian peace solution, his patience had become an object of admiration.

Putting the Public Interest Before Self or Organization

Hart and Hart state that "the only justification for the use of power by public executives is the advancement of the public interest" (1992, 91). Marshall's theory of what constitutes the public interest was that of a classic constitutional rationalist (Schubert 1960). His belief, constantly reaffirmed and followed throughout his mili-

tary and civilian government careers, was that the military must subordinate itself to the constitutional civilian authority of the state. An unelected official should never make or control important political decisions, but should seek guidance from those to whom the constitution assigns the responsibility. As he later confided to his biographer, this philosophy was so much a part of his being that he did not vote in partisan elections because he did not want to feel a greater commitment to the leaders of one party than to the other (Bland 1992). On arriving in Washington to

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assume the post of secretary of state in 1947, he disavowed to the press any interest in elected office and never wavered (Stoler 1989).

Marshall and Eisenhower have been criticized by some historians and politicians for their decision in the last days of the war in Europe not to attempt to reach Berlin and Prague before the Soviet army. In making this decision the two generals were guided by military considerations, not the least of which were the need to redeploy forces to the Pacific theater and the expectation that Soviet cooperation would be needed in the effort

against Japan. Both refused to move aggressively without a political directive from the president. Whatever the wisdom of an aggressive anti-Soviet strategy might have been, Marshall felt strongly that it was not his decision to make. Moreover, the military course of action was designed to maximize the safety of soldiers' lives (Pogue 1973, 574–578).

Marshall had an aversion to public expressions praising his accomplishments or extolling his person. He typically gave credit to those under his command while taking none for himself. When Winston Churchill sent a tribute to Marshall intended for distribution by his superior, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, Marshall managed to suppress its distribution through the department, claiming it would be embarrassing to his associate chiefs of staff (Bland and Stevens 1991).

Publicity, Marshall believed, should be sought only where it might advance an important military or national objective, such as the sale of war bonds or public support for feeding the hungry of Europe or rebuilding Europe's economy. He thought it unseemly to call attention to himself because it distracted from the need to concentrate upon mission accomplishment (Hart and Hart 1992). Despite this aversion, he was the administration's point man to Congress on virtually all national security policy issues and routinely drew praise (which may have embarrassed him but did not prompt him to deny his impact or withdraw from the role).

Marshall's distaste for publicity was just as likely as much a product of his innate humility as a reflection of his concept of the public interest. According to an aide who served him during World War II and again at the Department of State:

Possibly the most astounding personal quality in this man who held three of the most powerful jobs in the world was his humility. When, during his last years, people would recognize him and burst into spontaneous applause, he would invariably turn around to see who was being applauded. (Carter 1972, 6)

It was well known that Marshall greatly desired and expected to command the direct assault on Western Europe in 1944, Operation Overlord, a strategy he had stubbornly pursued throughout the war. The command eventually went to his subordinate, Eisenhower. Roosevelt had made it clear that the command was Marshall's if he indicated he wanted it. "But he would not have the command if he had to ask for it or even to reach out his hand" (Pogue 1973, 320). He said later:

I was determined that I should not embarrass the President one way or the other—that he must be able to deal in this matter with a perfectly free hand in whatever he felt was the best interest [of the country]. . . . I was utterly sincere in the desire to avoid what had happened so much in other wars—the consideration of the feelings of the individual rather than the good of the country. (Ibid., 321)

Finally, the popular labeling of the European Recovery Program as the "Marshall Plan" was Truman's idea, not Marshall's. Truman insisted that using Marshall's name increased chances of its enactment in a Republican Congress in an election year (Pogue 1987, 236).

Integrity and Self-Discipline

Marshall is universally renowned for his rock-solid integrity, the third leadership attribute. Truman said, "People not only thought he was telling them the truth, he did tell them the truth. He always told me the truth when I was President of the United States" (Mosley 1982, 401). He refused to seek special treatment for his family or friends. His personal files are studded with letters to friends and family politely, but firmly, refusing to intervene in requests for reassignment, promotion, or other help for their husbands or children. He refused to speak at the graduation of his stepson from a military training school, because he wanted no one to make an association between the two of them and thereby invite special treatment.

Marshall believed that the best type of discipline is self-discipline, developed from within the person and not imposed from without. His utter devotion to the task, a hallmark of his own self-discipline, manifested itself in many ways. One was his refusal to keep a journal or a diary. He did not want to be distracted by having to think about how his actions or decisions might look to historians or a future public (Bland and Stevens 1991, 207–208). This lack of desire to "look good" was the more surprising because he never earned an annual salary of more than \$10,000 and the sale of his memoirs could have been expected to ease his retirement years.

Employee- and Task-Centered Organizational Philosophy

Marshall was a firm believer in the welfare and morale of the citizen-soldier. His policy ideal was to have all able-bodied young men receive universal military training of at least six months, and then through retraining to keep them ready for active duty during wartime. Not able to convince Congress or President Roosevelt to support universal military training, he backed strong National Guard units as a viable alternative. He believed that the Guard, if properly equipped and subjected to periodic retraining, could be an effective national security force.

Marshall's regard for the welfare and morale of the troops is legendary. He de-

scribed morale as the “spiritual side” of a soldier’s preparedness, and defined its scope to include the well-being of the soldier’s family (Fitton 1991). In his frequent visits to military bases, Marshall gave the highest priority to chatting with enlisted men and officers of lower rank, inquiring as to their needs, informing their base

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commanders of needed improvements (movies and entertainment, quality reading material, for example), and then holding his command officers accountable for getting those things to the men (Carter 1972; Smith 2004). When he learned at Fort Benning that an issue of blankets had bogged down, he barked at the responsible officer: “Get those blankets and stoves and every other damn

thing that’s needed here tonight . . . not tomorrow tonight! We are going to take care of the troops first, last, and all the time” (Carter 1972, 4).

Another way Marshall demonstrated employee-centeredness was the care he gave to the practice of rotating high-ranking officers out of his staff offices in the Pentagon and into the field. He did this because he realized that their career advancement would turn heavily on an assessment of performance of command duties. Being “trapped” in staff jobs had impeded his progress in his own career, and he did his best not to allow it to happen to others. One valuable staff man he moved out to the field was Dwight Eisenhower.

In those inevitable cases when younger officers failed in command positions, Marshall would sometimes move them to staff jobs he knew they were well suited for rather than release them from service. The one type of command-officer failure he could not tolerate was one related to neglect of the legitimate needs of troops. In such cases he would not accept the officers in staff positions after releasing them from command duties. Munday summarizes his personnel-management philosophy by stating that it “entailed treating his subordinates with respect, holding them accountable for their actions, but also cutting them some slack so long as they were trying hard” (2002, 24).

Another strong tenet of Marshall’s employee-centered management style was delegating responsibility and trusting organizational managers to do the job (Bland and Stevens 1996, 383; Clifford and Holbrooke 1991, 16). He made his staff officers refrain from giving advice to field commanders or demanding unnecessary reports from them (Bland 1988, 36). He was tolerant of *first* mistakes, although he typically called attention to them, and gave personnel a second chance. He admired officers who acknowledged and worked at learning not to repeat mistakes. But he did not accept the repetition of mistakes. He took low morale as direct evidence of failure of leadership.

On the task-oriented side of the equation, Marshall was best known for his insistence upon unity of command, teamwork, and coordination. These were in clear evidence in his shaping of the combined Allied command structure at the beginning of the war (Bland and Stevens 1996, 41, 63–65) and again when he reorganized the Department of State in 1947 (Acheson 1969). He presented the following argument at the Arcadia conference in December 1941.

As a result of what I saw in [World War I] and from following our own experience, I feel very strongly that the most important consideration is the question of unity of

command. The matters being settled here are mere details which will continuously reoccur unless settled in a broader way. With differences between groups and between services, the situation is impossible unless we operate on a frank and direct basis. I am convinced that there must be one man in command of the entire theater—air, ground, and ships. We can not manage but by cooperation. Human frailties are such that there would be emphatic unwillingness to place portions of troops under another service. If we make a plan for unified command now, it will solve nine-tenths of our troubles. (Sherwood 1948, 455)

In Marshall's view, unity of command had to be accompanied by teamwork and coordination. Consultations and consensus were sought between allies, between levels of command, and within units, and this dialogue set the stage for the evolution of decisions which eventually came from the top, with the commanding officer taking responsibility. Communication should flow smoothly from bottom to top, from top to bottom, and laterally between units.

Planning and the acceptance of rational change were other principles adhered to closely by Marshall. He began the process of postwar problem forecasting and needs assessment in 1943 (two full years before the close of hostilities) with the appointment of older, broadly educated men beyond command age. At State, Marshall created a new Office of Policy Planning and placed the visionary George T. Kennan at its head (Isaacson and Thomas 1986, 404–405).

Ability to Recognize and Utilize Talent

Nowhere does leadership manifest itself more strongly than in the selection, development, and advancement of effective talent, the next attribute of leadership. It is crucially important that the leader have the judgment and processes to find quality persons with strong ethical as well as task capacity, and to place them in positions for which they are well suited. Marshall's ability to recognize talent was in part based on his many years as a teacher and trainer, in which positions he observed men functioning in the field, both in training and combat situations. As a young lieutenant assigned to the elite Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, he taught officers of special talent who outranked him. He observed and rated them on their knowledge and performance. This group of men became the heart of the army's leadership corps in World War I, and Marshall interacted with many of them on the battlefield in France. From 1927 to 1932 he was assigned to Fort Benning, Georgia, as assistant commandant of the Infantry School. As *de facto* dean of the school, he was given free rein in redesigning officer training. He emphasized problem-solving, direct observation, simplicity, innovativeness, and mobility, eschewing the previously favored study of classic battle analyses. Here he closely observed some 200 of the army's top-ranking officers. According to his wife Katherine, his years at Fort Benning "were of incalculable value later in choosing his higher commanders. He has always said that he possesses a wicked memory; and this is true—he never forgets a brilliant performance and he never forgets a dullard" (Marshall 1947, 9). Among this group, which he termed "the most brilliant, interesting and thoroughly competent collection of men I have ever been associated with" (Stoler 1989, 55–56), he observed, taught, and interacted with future generals like Bradley, Smith, Hodges, Collins, Ridgway, Patton, and Stilwell. He looked for three qualities in potential command

officers: integrity, competence, and offensive-mindedness. Throughout his career, he was charged with designing large-scale training maneuvers on a regular basis for National Guard units. This gave him the opportunity to design training exercises involving many units and thousands of personnel, to experiment with them, and to evaluate the field behavior of field commanders under simulated battle conditions.

Secretary of State Marshall, upon the advice of Dean Acheson and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, recruited George Kennan, a career diplomat then em-

Despite his passion and clear thinking about military requirements, he was nonetheless aware of the political constraints under which politicians and especially presidents acted, and saw the necessity of providing them with face-saving alternatives and symbolic victories falling short of optimum results.

ployed at the National War College, to head the new Policy Planning Staff, a Marshall creation. Kennan (the moody and visionary expert on Soviet relations who had authored the containment policy in its early stages), Acheson, Robert Lovett (who was to replace Acheson), and Charles Bohlen (a gifted diplomat), all Marshall appointees, were to play key roles in preparing and executing the initiative for European economic recovery. Together, they decided that the success of the initiative lay in sufficient funding and the need to have specific program proposals

come from the European governments, with technical assistance from the State Department to ensure that what was asked was within America's capacity to deliver (Donovan 1987; Isaacson and Thomas 1986, 404–410; Pogue 1987, 202–205).

High Ethical Standards

Marshall demanded a high level of ethical conduct from everyone with whom he worked and conducted himself in a manner that set a clear model for others to emulate. He possessed a strong moral code that honored marital fidelity, honest dealing, and following through on promises, and was opposed to fraternizing with foreign nationals. He believed that the conduct of officers should be at a level above that of ordinary soldiers and airmen. One will search in vain in the bibliographic sources, letters and memoranda, and recollections of others for a hint of indiscretion, a dishonest act, or a knowing misrepresentation. Nor has anything of the sort been reported that related to a group with whom he had close contact. He once said to some officers,

Never for an instant can you divest yourselves of the fact that you are officers. On the athletic field, at the club, in civilian clothes, or even at home on leave, the fact that you are a commissioned officer in the Army imposes a constant obligation to higher standards than might ordinarily seem normal or necessary for your personal guidance. (Fitton 1991, 303)

Despite inspiring loyalty and admiration, Marshall was often seen as aloof. He believed in separating his personal life from his official life, disliked familiarity, signed his personal correspondence to persons with whom he had close friendships as "Marshall," and addressed them in the same formal manner. Yet his daily correspondence is filled with kind and gracious notes and gestures to people with whom

he worked or came into contact, as well as to members of their families. Marshall sought no special favors for his own family or friends and deplored being asked for such by others. The quickest way to get on Marshall's blacklist was to ask him for special treatment. Almost everyone, with two especially noteworthy exceptions,³ regarded him as incorruptible and fair-minded.

Political/Social/Economic Sensitivity

Marshall, Pershing, and others opposed the wholesale dismantling of America's military forces following World War I, but after initial success they lost the fight. As the Second World War approached, Marshall stood with Roosevelt in understanding the great threat an unprepared nation posed for itself as well as for its allies. Unlike Roosevelt, he had a much more developed, militarily professional perspective on what preparedness required and could be highly convincing on the subject. Roosevelt was keen enough to spot Marshall's effectiveness as a spokesman for defense and used him constantly as his agent to inform, persuade, cajole, and, if need be, scare a split Congress into attitudes of support (Parrish 1989). Marshall testified before committees of both houses on a regular basis and drew respect from both political parties for his no-nonsense, fact-intensive, sometimes passionately earnest, and always comprehensive yet succinctly written reports and testimony. For his part, Marshall understood the political environment and the political calculus undergirding the acquisition, and the timing of the acquisition, of military resources. Despite frequent battles with doctrinaire opponents of spending, he kept his outward calm and impressed a majority of them, regardless of their political persuasion, with the weight of his evidence and the soundness of his judgment. As Robert Sherwood noted,

Faced with stupidity and shortsightedness [of members of Congress] which would have driven a weaker man to despair, Marshall maintained at least the semblance of calmness and patience; but it can never be doubted that he endured intense inward suffering, not from frustration for himself but for the integrity and security of the Republic. (1948, 164–165)

Despite his passion and clear thinking about military requirements, he was nonetheless aware of the political constraints under which politicians, and especially presidents, acted and saw the necessity of providing them with face-saving alternatives and symbolic victories falling short of optimum results.

In the aftermath of World War II, Marshall's thought processes adjusted to the new global situation. Europe lay in ruins, its people hungry and its economic engine nonexistent. The Soviet Union approved of the situation, seeing in its existence the promise of the extension of communism and Soviet influence westward. In a ceremony in November 1945, after the war, honoring his service as chief of staff, Marshall spoke of the need "to avoid another world catastrophe. . . . Along with the great problem of maintaining the peace we must solve the problem of the pittance of food, of clothing and coal and homes" (Pogue 1987, 2–3). As secretary of state in the spring of 1947, in Moscow he encountered the obstructionism and self-centeredness of the Soviets standing opposed to peace treaties for Germany and Austria and European reconstruction. Deeply disturbed, he returned to America and reported by radio to the nation: "we cannot ignore the factor of the time involved. Disintegrating forces

are becoming evident. The patient is sinking while the doctors deliberate. So I believe that action can not await compromise through exhaustion” (ibid., 200). Working closely with Acheson, Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Will Clayton, Bohlen, and Kennan, he led the initiative that was to become the European Recovery Program.

Inclusiveness

According to Bland (1988, 32–33), the key to Marshall’s success may have been his tolerance for democratic beliefs and civilian values. In Marshall’s view, such tolerance was essential to understanding the role of the army in society. In American public administration, diversity in organizations is now a very important aspect of ethical leadership, and Marshall showed early sensitivity to the dynamic, if not the letter, of this policy. Fairness demands that he be appraised on the attribute of inclusiveness in light of the times in which he served. Equal employment was not a national policy priority in World War II and had to be subordinated to the greater goal of waging the war. Opposition to inclusion, particularly in the southern states, threatened to disrupt training operations. It is therefore the more remarkable that Marshall, occasionally with the gentle nudging of Eleanor Roosevelt, championed black rights and special training of black divisions and their use in combat roles, often over the objections of Army field commanders (Pogue 1973, 538–539). Marshall supported the formation of special fighting units, not only of African-Americans but also of Japanese-Americans and Native Americans. He also supported integration of black troops in white platoons. To further the morale of servicemen, all major religions were recognized and provided with chaplaincy services. Moreover, Marshall successfully lobbied Congress for the establishment of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (the “WAACs”) in 1943 and defended it throughout the balance of the war against its detractors, although it seems clear that Marshall’s major motive was to promote service efficiency rather than equality of the sexes (Stoler 1989, 122).

The Marshall Papers contain numerous letters of complaint to Marshall from Eleanor Roosevelt concerning discrimination against African-Americans in southern U.S. communities as well as in the European Command. The same files do not disclose what, if anything, Marshall did or did not do about them, beyond a prompt initial referral to staff, with directions for giving immediate attention to each matter. It is clear that Marshall placed primary importance on the goal of military victory in the race to save lives (as judged by his favoring of an early invasion of France and support of the use of the atomic bomb in Japan). If a black fighting unit was subpar in performance, as the 92d Division was reported to be in Italy, Marshall favored fighting efficiency and gave secondary importance to inclusion (Pogue 1973, 539).

Respected Personal Traits

Besides integrity and courage, observers have noted Marshall’s unusual capacities of civility, directness and simplicity, acceptance of change, respect for friendship, compassion, calmness and order, and accessibility. For these traits, as well as for his professional-knowledge competence, he was greatly admired and revered as a person, not only by his staff but also by his field commanders, Allied commanders,

rank-and-file soldiers, members of Congress, his political superiors and subordinates in the executive branch, and the general public. Without elaboration, the tribute of Robert A. Lovett, former secretary of defense and Marshall's deputy at both Defense and State, one year after Marshall's death, is telling for its insight into these qualities of personality:

Much has been said of General Marshall as a great public figure but not nearly enough about him as a very great human being. . . . His eminence in leadership, it seems to me, was a talent bestowed by a divine Providence and heightened by use and experience. . . . His greatness, however, was enriched by personal traits which, like ardor, spring from the heart. He was a man of extraordinary compassion, of most sensitive and discriminating instinct, and there was an air of natural elegance about him which was unassuming and added enormously to his calm dignity. . . . There were two qualities which seemed to me to have had deep, perhaps even controlling, influence in lifting him to the heights of true greatness: first, his sincere concern for others; and second, his acceptance of change as a law of nature. (Lovett 1960)

Some or all of these traits may have helped Marshall to win the loyalty and sacrifices of his staff. Still, with the exception of tolerance for change, there is little in the literature to support a claim that they are necessary to ethical leadership.

Shortcomings

Marshall was a poor orator, possessed of an unstimulating, monotonous voice that, by itself, rarely inspired enthusiasm. Many thought him to be of average intelligence, although on occasion he demonstrated a prodigious ability to take a battery of questions silently and then answer them in turn without using notes. Yet he often forgot the names of people, even individuals with whom he worked closely. He was not charismatic in the sense of a George Patton or a Douglas MacArthur. He was not renowned for a sense of humor, though he had a wry wit, and he could not abide "dirty jokes." Early in his career, he was criticized for being too much of a military martinet, too concerned with spit and polish, too unforgiving if rules were not strictly followed, but these were not hallmarks of his behavior as chief of staff or in his later civilian positions. He was a very reserved man, and struck some as aloof. He exhibited occasional bursts of temper, for which he frequently expressed regret, and he struggled to correct this trait, because he felt that anger clouded thinking and decision-making. Although these faults at times may have limited his effectiveness, he continued working to reduce them.

Larger Issues of War and Weapons

A discussion of Marshall and ethics should not avoid considering what he thought of war and his role in the decision to use the atom bomb in Japan. The Marshall Papers contain many references to the horror and futility of war. Several representative quotations will give a sense of his thinking on this matter that consumed most of his life. In a letter in February 1944 to an Iowa youngster who had expressed a wish to fight for his country, Marshall confided, "but I must confess to you that it makes me sad as well as very angry to think that these Japs [*sic*] and Nazis have brought us to

such a pass that fine, clean young boys like you must be thinking of killing men, of machine guns, bombs and other deadly tools of war,” and he looked forward to a time when “boys and girls like you may think more of kindness than of death and hatreds and may live useful lives in a peaceful world” (Bland and Stevens 1996, 261).

In September of the same year, in a nationally broadcast speech to the American Legion, he said, “War is the most terrible tragedy of the human race and it should not be prolonged an hour longer than is absolutely necessary” (ibid., 592). His witnessing of suffering in France in both world wars weighed heavily upon him.

It was perhaps an ironic consequence of his abhorrence of war that he favored, along with Stimson, Roosevelt, Truman, and other key decision-makers, using the atomic bomb to shorten the war. In Marshall’s mind, this was a kind of calculus. The reason he gave toward the end of his life for having favored the bomb’s use was that

Marshall believed that the decision to use or not use the bomb was a political and not a military decision. Beyond this, his take on the tactical issue of how the bomb should be used, given the political decision to use it, provides further insight into his view of the value of human life.

the Japanese had given every sign of fighting to the last person in defense of their homeland, with the probable result that many American, Japanese, and Soviet lives, perhaps in the hundreds of thousands, as well as the great treasure needed for reconstruction, would be lost in the effort. He noted that Japan had lost 110,000 dead in Okinawa with but a handful of voluntary surrenders, and kamikaze suicide pilots had routinely immolated themselves against U.S. naval targets.

His conclusion: An invasion of Japan would

be one of the bloodiest chapters of the war and should be avoided if at all possible (Pogue 1973, 17–18).

Above all, Marshall believed that the decision to use or not use the bomb was a political and not a military decision. Beyond this, his take on the tactical issue of how the bomb should be used, given the political decision to use it, provides further insight into his view of the value of human life. Marshall initially recommended that the bomb be used on a military target, such as a large naval base, and if this were not sufficient to invoke surrender, then on industrial centers after warnings were given to the civilian population to evacuate. Ultimately, the larger planning group decided to hit cities only, and without warning. His position on this larger decision is not clear. He also recommended, as an alternative, the use of nonlethal gas to “sicken them so that the fight would be taken out of them” (ibid., 17–18). He later allowed as how it was “silly,” after the fact, to contend that the weapon should not have been used, given the reasonable projections of losses that were being made at the time.

Linking Attributes to Effectiveness

The analysis in this essay strengthens the judgment of Hart and Hart (1992) that Marshall is a moral exemplar and carries their thesis a step further. It does this by enlarging the set of ethics-laden attributes that are logically and causally related to organizational effectiveness. For example, the proposition that the ability to recognize and appropriately utilize talented people increases organizational productivity seems perfectly logical. Similarly, the attributes of placing policy goals before serving self and organization, combining employee-centered and task-centered manage-

ment styles, a penchant for medium-term planning, sensitivity to the political/economic/social environment, and inclusiveness permit arguable links to productivity.

This essay has focused on attributes of public administration leadership that are grounded in the public administration literature: public interest and constitutional role, employee-centered and task-centered management style, unity of command, delegation and trust. Thus, it is not typical of trait-based approaches to leadership theory that focus solely on such personality elements as sociability, intelligence, integrity, self-confidence, and determination (Northouse 2004, 15–21). It is also atypical of the trait-based approach in other significant ways: (1) it looks at the leader across a number of situations (a variety of military organizational units and roles, a diplomatic mission, two cabinet-level departments, a charitable organization), (2) covers a long period of time (fifty years, in war and peacetime), and (3) examines attributes in relationship to leadership outcomes.

The linkage between attributes and organizational achievement admittedly requires other conditions. The actor's position and authority, as well as the opportunities implicit in the organizational environment, necessarily play important roles in converting traits into tangible product (Northouse 2004, 55–88). In the case of Marshall, the reality and desperate circumstances of an all-out war certainly helped to create a supportive environment conducive to national commitment, cooperative action, and mission focus and achievement. In the position of Army chief of staff, as well as in his cabinet posts, he also had the positional authority to make things happen. Of course, it may be persuasively argued that another type of environment, say, running a county health department, would require a somewhat different mix of ethical leadership attributes for success. But it is possible and entirely plausible that most or all of the attributes that fostered Marshall's success as wartime leader are transferable to other environments. Certainly, Marshall's acknowledged success in peacetime roles tends to support this proposition.

Proof of the efficacy of ethical leadership must necessarily await the aggregation of multiple cases in which the presence of certain attributes is correlated with acknowledged achievement under specific and differing circumstances. The question of which leadership traits, behaviors, and approaches, ethical and nonethical, are likely to be critical variables in producing good results is raised and systematically treated in two studies. Denhardt (1993, viii) examines leader processes, characteristics, and philosophies in evidence in a variety of public programs widely acknowledged as successful. He lists five approaches common to the reputedly exemplary public administrators he interviewed: (1) a commitment to values, (2) concern for serving the public, (3) empowerment and shared leadership, (4) pragmatic incrementalism, and (5) dedication to public service. He argues that these capture the new style of public management widely accepted as successful. Collins (2001, 73) and his team also identified and studied highly successful corporate executives. The best of them were found to share the following qualities: (1) they channel their ego needs into institutional goals and not into themselves—a process demanding humility plus a strong will, compelling modesty, ferocious resolve, and finally, giving credit to factors outside themselves when things go well and accepting personal responsibility when things go poorly; (2) they possess workmanlike diligence; (3) they usually grow up within the organization; (4) they have the ability to get and keep enough of the right people and to match the best people with the best opportunities; (5) they fight like mad before decisions are made, then accept the need for

unity afterwards; (6) their visions give way to realities as these arise; and (7) they are *not* necessarily charismatic.

Marshall's career paints a picture of effectiveness that mostly overlaps but also adds to and occasionally departs from the pictures drawn by Denhardt and Collins. His key leadership qualities were: (1) recognizing talent and fitting it to organizational tasks promising the greatest payoffs; (2) ensuring that those who were selected drew their vision, mission, goals, and strategic objectives from democratic and constitutional forces; (3) trusting and supporting the organization's members in performing their tasks, while shielding them from second-guessers regarding their choices of methods and means; (4) being sensitive to criticisms of those who had invested their trust, namely dependent organizational members and intended public beneficiaries; (5) exhibiting personal integrity, setting an example of high standards and demanding the same from other organizational members; and (6) modeling a clearly developed sense of role consistent with the ideal of serving the public.

The ethical leadership qualities drawn from Marshall's "ideal type" career thus add force to a summative set of observed traits leading to effective administration. Other observations and surveys of knowledgeable students and practitioners of the organizational craft, some in print and others yet to be published, should refine the list, help tailor attributes to relevant environments, and promote further exploration.

Conclusions

Close study of the wide-ranging, combined military, diplomatic, and cabinet-level public administrative career of George C. Marshall adds to our understanding of the power of ethical leadership in public administration. It does this by focusing attention upon a set of personal attributes and practices that are associated with both sterling moral character and monumental achievement, thus producing a near-ideal case that may aid in building theory that links ethical leadership to organizational effectiveness. In the case of Marshall, there is virtually unanimous agreement on his effectiveness and his possession of certain qualities of mind, heart, and practice. Marshall's administrative role, entailing as it did great authority, admits of little doubt—he was clearly the lead decision-maker and administrator in directing the successful Allied war effort. Thus, whatever attributes of personality, virtues, and practices he exhibited in his various leadership roles gain special saliency in explaining the complex roots of organizational outcomes.

As a leader Marshall was beset with seeming ethical contradictions. A man of war, he was a powerful foe of war. As "the man on top" he typically led by allowing others to lead. A humane and selfless man who always put the welfare of others first, he led the effort to fund and build the atomic bomb and then was part of the decision to use it on a civilian population. As one of the architects of the cold war, he labored mightily, though unsuccessfully, to achieve an accommodation between Communists and Nationalists in a single democratic China. Atop a classic hierarchical organization, he nonetheless promoted the role of the citizen-soldier through his work with the National Guard, and imbued millions of organizational members with a sense of participation. He was, truly, "a man for all seasons." Yet, at his core, he was confident of his role and abilities, comfortable with and consistent in his moral behavior, loyal to the elected political leadership and to those with whom he worked,

and rock solid in his duty and purpose—which was always service, to the people of the United States and, finally, to the world.⁴

Ongoing research and theory-building by scholars and practitioners in public administration and leadership studies will advance our understanding of the nature of ethical leadership and its practical consequences. Were Marshall's moral sensibilities related to his monumental achievements? The career of George C. Marshall is a case in which both of these things were present in abundance. The pursuit of ends (victory in war with the least loss, and securing the peace) *and* acting in accordance with duty to principles were both at work in the mind of this exemplar. The study of George C. Marshall's classic administrative success and sterling moral character, coexisting as they do, gives us hope that the two are causally related.

NOTES

1. The material on Marshall's youth and pre-World War II career is taken largely from the first volume of Forrest C. Pogue and Gordon Harrison's four-volume work (1963).

2. Many of these are collected in the four volumes of the Marshall Papers (Bland and Hadsel 1981; Bland, Ritenour, and Wunderlin 1986; Bland, and Stevens 1991; Bland and Stevens 1996).

3. Douglas MacArthur and Clark Clifford were notable detractors. MacArthur, commander of the Southwest Pacific theater, frequently faulted Marshall for what he regarded as a European bias in the allocation of military stores and troops. Clifford quarreled sharply with Marshall over his opposition to unilateral U.S. recognition of Israel in 1947 and found him to be unapproachable and stubborn (Clifford and Holbrooke 1991).

4. For a moving testimony to Marshall's legacy, see Colin Powell's tribute to him (Barber 1997).

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