

# STRATEGIC LEADER META-COMPETENCIES



DEPARTMENT OF COMMAND, LEADERSHIP, AND MANAGEMENT  
**UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE**

STRATEGIC LEADER  
META-COMPETENCIES  
AND UNDERLYING  
CHARACTERISTICS:  
SOME ARE MEASURABLE, AND  
SOME ARE MALLEABLE

*SILAS MARTINEZ (ED.)*

*LOU YUENGERT (ED.)*

*STEPHEN BANKS*

*DAVID ECKLEY*

*MARK STACKLE*

*FOREWORD BY LOU YUENGERT*

*DEPARTMENT OF COMMAND, LEADERSHIP, AND  
MANAGEMENT*

*SCHOOL OF STRATEGIC LANDPOWER  
U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE PA*

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Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to the editor, COL Silas G. Martinez, Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, School of Strategic Landpower, U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013-5010.

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## FOREWORD

The monograph *Strategic Leader Meta-Competencies* that follows was written by a group of U.S. Army War College students under faculty supervision in support of the Army Talent Management Task Force. Their stated intent is to help inform the development of the Colonel Command Assessment Program (CCAP), whose inaugural implementation took place in September of 2020. The first iteration of CCAP drew significantly from the Battalion Command Assessment Program (BCAP) that was successfully implemented in 2019-2020. BCAP's focus is on "fit for command" issues primarily. Future iterations of CCAP will focus more fully on identifying officers with the most strategic potential (among other factors). This work is intended to help shape how the Army assesses strategic potential in future CCAP iterations.

As you read *Strategic Leader Meta-Competencies*, I ask that you resist the temptation to criticize the selection and naming of these meta-competencies until you read the detailed discussions about the characteristics that are associated with them. While the meta-competencies they developed are important to understanding what the Army expects from its strategic leaders, they are not the most important part of this critical work. In the discussion of each meta-competency, underlying characteristics that make up the meta-competency are identified. These characteristics are the focus and the truly valuable part of the monograph. Documenting the malleability of each characteristic (i.e., to what extent can a given characteristic be developed) and providing a survey of existing measurement tools to measure them are the bulk of this work. The recommendations rely heavily on the students' research into malleability and measurement of attributes/characteristics.

Louis G. Yuengert  
Professor of Defense Leadership and  
Enterprise Management  
U.S. Army War College

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Mark Stackle, David Eckley, and Silas Martinez*

As the capability gap between the United States military and its global competitors continues to shrink, the Army has countered with the launch of a transformative talent management effort to maintain its competitive edge over its rivals. Officer assessments comprise a critical component of the Army's effort. While doctrinal requirements and existing measurement tools facilitate implementation of assessments for junior and mid-grade officers, assessment strategies for senior leaders are underdeveloped. This report informs talent management at the strategic level.

Talent management at the strategic level demands a common understanding of strategic leader capability. After analyzing more than 100 strategic leadership competencies found in over 100 source documents, this report presents a meta-competency framework describing the essence of strategic leadership capability. The six meta-competencies shown in Table I provide a common understanding of strategic talent requirements that can inform future Army doctrine. However, assessing desired strategic leader talent requires a focus on more narrowly defined underlying characteristics. This report also describes nineteen underlying characteristics that comprise the six meta-competencies. By measuring the presence of these characteristics in senior leaders, the Army can best understand individual strengths and weaknesses important to strategic leadership capability. Officers who demonstrate these meta-competencies and their underlying characteristics possess the attributes that best predict successful leadership in the strategic environment.

The preponderance of the report provides an evaluation of each meta-competency's underlying characteristics to support the development of an effective senior leader assessment program. Characteristics were assessed for malleability and measurement. Malleability refers to whether the attribute changes over time and can be influenced by education, training or experience. Characteristics were then assessed for how they are currently

measured. Those characteristics that are not easily measured require additional focus from the Army’s assessment developers. Tables describing characteristic malleability and measures are included throughout the report.

Meta-Competency	Underlying Characteristics	
<i>Exercise Mental Agility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence</li> <li>• Intellectual Curiosity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems Thinking and Understanding</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> </ul>
<i>Formulate Powerful Vision</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic thinking</li> <li>• Innovation and Creativity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Change Management</li> </ul>
<i>Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiative</li> </ul>
<i>Build Successful Teams</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>• Negotiation Skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-Cultural Competence</li> <li>• Develop and Motivate Others</li> </ul>
<i>Communicate Effectively</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written and Oral Communication</li> <li>• Emotional Intelligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-Cultural Competence</li> <li>• Lead Up and Out</li> </ul>
<i>Demonstrate Ethical Ambition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral and Ethical Conduct</li> <li>• Self-Efficacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conscientiousness</li> <li>• Resilience</li> </ul>

*Table I. Meta-Competencies and Underlying Characteristics*

This report presents several implications for senior leader talent management. First, the Army lacks doctrine clearly defining essential strategic leader capability. Second, an initial comparison of meta-competency characteristics in this report with characteristics identified for the Colonel’s Command Assessment Program demonstrates significant overlap. While the terminology used in this report differs slightly from those used by the Army Talent Management Task Force, this report validates that the Army is seeking to measure many of the right strategic leader characteristics. Third, not all strategic leader characteristics are malleable. If measured earlier in an officer’s career, re-assessment at the senior level is unnecessary. Finally, instruments do not exist



to measure all the characteristics essential to strategic leader talent management.

In order to address these implications, we recommend the following primary actions for strategic leadership assessment:

1. Consider the proposed strategic leadership meta-competency framework as a basis for augmenting Army doctrine and creating a common understanding of strategic leadership capability.
2. Distill the number of characteristics assessed at the senior level by moving non-malleable characteristics to junior or mid-grade officer assessments.
3. Where available, leverage existing characteristic measurement instruments. Focus Army resources on developing instruments for those strategic leader characteristics which lack existing measures.

The Army is in the midst of a revolutionary change with how it manages talent at the most strategic level. As the Army's reliance on assessments grows, it is essential to continuously evaluate the meta-competencies and characteristics essential for Army strategic leaders. It is imperative that Army leaders continue to explore the malleable nature of these strategic leader competencies in order to effectively align developmental resources with those leader characteristics most likely to develop over time. Army testing experts must continuously work to ensure that the instruments employed by the Army remain reliable, valid, and aligned with real world outcomes. If the Army can execute this effectively, it will achieve an enduring competitive advantage over current and future adversaries.

## CHAPTER 1. THE CASE FOR ASSESSMENTS

*David Eckley*

*“One of the greatest talents of all is the talent to recognize and to develop talent in others.”*

*-Frank Tyger, The High Achiever’s Guide to Happiness*

The 2019 Army People Strategy casts a vision to “build cohesive teams for the Joint Force by maximizing the talents of our people.”<sup>1</sup> The strategy prescribes numerous critical enablers to accomplish this vision including the development of a “21<sup>st</sup> Century Talent Management System.” There are many aspects captured within this vision; improving and increasing the data available to decision-makers, focusing on talent requirements for positions and teams, increasing the flexibility within the system in order to recruit, retain, develop and employ people better, and better identifying the talents of all Soldiers so that the Army can maximize their use. This last aspect is a critical foundational effort upon which any future talent management system depends.

The Army Talent Management Task Force (ATMTF) is actively developing and refining a series of assessments designed to best manage talent across the active component. Current plans include programmed objective assessments that evaluate officers progressively throughout their career including pre-commissioning, Captain’s Career Course (O-3), Intermediate Level Education (O-4), prior to Battalion Command (O-5), and following selection to Senior Service College (senior O-5/O-6). While early assessments provide diagnostic and developmental feedback to the Army and evaluated officers, subsequent assessments may be used to predict an officer’s capability to serve successfully in designated positions of strategic importance (see Table 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Ryan D. McCarthy, James C. McConville, and Michael A. Grinston, “The Army People Strategy” (U.S. Army, October 2019), 3.

Additionally, this series of progressive assessments is designed to create a “culture of assessment” as officers become used to the idea that the results of assessments (other than the officer efficiency report, OER) will be used to make decisions about assignments, schooling, professional development, and selection/promotion. In the current system, performance evaluations, assignment history, and personal relationships are paramount in these decisions. While performance and personal networks will still be paramount, they will be augmented with information about officer knowledge, skills, abilities and preferences (KSA-Ps) that, until now, has not been available to inform these decisions.

Assessment programs for cadets, company grade officers, field grade officers, and senior service college students are in various stages of development and implementation (see Table 1). The Battalion Command Assessment Program (BCAP), a series of physical, cognitive, and non-cognitive assessments focused on fitness for command, has already been successfully used to pick O-5s for centrally selected list (CSL) positions. The Colonels Command Assessment Program (CCAP), scheduled to be implemented for the first time in September 2020, is an assessment battery whose stated purpose is determination of both strategic potential (service at the O-6 and general officer level) and fitness for command. Initial design considerations for CCAP rely heavily on the Battalion Command Assessment Program (BCAP) construct, with the intent to build exclusive CCAP instruments for FY22 and beyond. The primary challenge with CCAP development lies in clarifying the essential characteristics of strategic leadership and determining how to measure and evaluate the presence of such characteristics in assessed officers. Validation of an accepted strategic leader competency framework is important to the success of the ongoing CCAP buildout.

To that end, this report is a response to a tasking from the Director of the ATMTF to identify the core competencies essential for strategic leadership in the Army. It details a comprehensive review of leadership literature in conjunction with recent Army research to derive six meta-competencies that describe the essence of Army strategic leadership. Additionally, it evaluates the malleability and measurement of the underlying characteristics to

inform the development of testing instruments and selection of the right officers for Army strategic leadership assignments.

Assessment	PME	Grade	Type	Purpose
Talent Assessment Battery (TAB)	N/A	Cadet	Diagnostic & developmental	Inform Army Talent Alignment Process
Career Courses' Cognitive Assessment Battery (C3AB)	CCC	O-3	Diagnostic & developmental	Self-development, inform career choices
ILE Assessment (name TBD)	ILE	O-4	Predictive	Inform assignment to Key Developmental billets
Battalion Commander Assessment Program (BCAP)	N/A	O-5	Predictive	Screen/select battalion commanders
Colonels Commander Assessment Program (CCAP)	SSC	O-5/O-6	Predictive	Screen/select brigade commanders and key strategic billets

*Table 1. Programmed Officer Assessments*



## CHAPTER 2. THE SEARCH FOR A STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

*David Eckley*

Identification of a strategic leader competency framework assumes that “strategic leadership” is a distinct type of leadership as well as a unique talent that can be assessed. The notion of strategic leadership as a qualitative ability in addition to a feature of organizational design gained traction in social science research as recently as the 1980s, and, during the 1990s, Elliott Jaques incorporated these ideas in his Stratified Systems Theory.<sup>2</sup> The Army’s interest in this distinct ability followed in 1998 with the publication of the U.S. Army War College’s (USAWC) first *Strategic Leadership Primer*.<sup>3</sup> When the Army Training and Leader Development officer panel study in 2001 identified critical leadership abilities for the overall officer population, General Shinseki, the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), subsequently commissioned a special USAWC study to identify “strategic leader skill sets for officers in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> environment.”<sup>4</sup>

Previously, Army studies narrowly relegated strategic leadership to the general officer ranks, but they made the important distinction that ‘strategic’ refers to a way of thinking, not just a level of war beyond tactical and operational.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, strategic leadership is a capability, not a position, and is required by officers who have increased responsibility for an organization, who are concerned with internal as well as external spheres of influence, and who operate in an environment characterized by ambiguity and complexity.<sup>6</sup> Also important, these studies indicated that strategic leader capability was necessary at the

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<sup>2</sup> Elliott Jaques, *Requisite Organization: A Total System for Effective Managerial Organization and Managerial Leadership for the 21st Century* (Arlington, VA: Cason Hall, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Roderick R. Magee, *Strategic Leadership Primer* (Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, United States Army War College, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Wong et al., “Strategic Leader Competencies” (Carlisle Barracks, PA, U.S. Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Wong et al., 1.

<sup>6</sup> Donald C. Hambrick, “Guest Editor’s Introduction: Putting Top Managers Back in the Strategy Picture,” *Strategic Management Journal* 10, no. 51 (1989): 5–15, <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250100703> as quoted in; Wong et al., “Strategic Leader Competencies,” 1.

colonel level, determining that although not all colonels serve in strategic leader positions, they should possess strategic leader capability.<sup>7</sup> Finally, strategic leader capability implies an expertise defined by explicit competencies that can be developed over time.

### **Leadership Competency Framework Design**

Concurrent with the discovery of strategic leadership's qualitative nature, competency frameworks driving executive leader selection and development emerged in the 1990s. This phenomenon resulted from increasing competitive demands in the marketplace with organizations seeking every possible competitive advantage, including in better executive performance. Social science researchers describe a competency as "an underlying characteristic of an individual which is causally related to effective or superior performance in a job."<sup>8</sup> Organizations consequently perceive competencies as an important tool in helping to define and improve superior executive performance. Competency frameworks give organizations a common language that executives, high-potential managers, and human resource personnel use to discuss executive performance, selection, development and advancement.<sup>9</sup>

Social science researchers Briscoe and Hall describe three common methodologies for deriving competency frameworks: research-based, strategy-based, and values-based approaches. In a research-based approach, organizations interview their top performing executives to identify behaviors that exemplify the keys to their success. These behaviors are systematically analyzed to determine those competencies that distinguish superior performance. The strategy-based approach does not look at what made executives successful in the past, but rather focuses on the strategic direction and goals of the organization. This methodology depends directly on the accuracy with which the organization predicts the future. Organizations implementing the

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<sup>7</sup> Wong et al., "Strategic Leader Competencies," 1.

<sup>8</sup> Jon P. Briscoe and Douglas T. Hall, "Grooming and Picking Leaders Using Competency Frameworks: Do They Work? An Alternative Approach and New Guidelines for Practice," *Organizational Dynamics* 28, no. 2 (1999): 37, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-2616\(00\)80015-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-2616(00)80015-7).

<sup>9</sup> Briscoe and Hall, 39.

value-based competency approach use idiosyncratic, normative, or cultural values to construct competencies. This generally produces a shorter list of competencies more likely to be utilized by leaders but has the drawback of lacking a systematic approach.<sup>10</sup>

Leader competency frameworks become counterproductive to leaders and organizations when competency lists are too comprehensive. For an individual, it is difficult to assess leadership ability when competency lists demand a leader to be, know, and do just about everything. Organizations find it difficult to focus leader development efforts if too broad an array of competencies is advocated.<sup>11</sup> Another caution with prescriptive competency lists is that they create the impression that success can be assured by mastering specific competencies.<sup>12</sup> In the context of strategic leadership, the more that organizations attempt to define lists of detailed, specific competencies, the more they lead away from the agile, adaptive, and self-aware leader they desire.<sup>13</sup>

A best practice in competency framework design is identifying a short list of meta-competencies – competencies so powerful that they affect a person's ability to acquire other competencies.<sup>14</sup> By carefully identifying meta-competencies, framework developers account for an array of important sub-competencies. The desire for meta-competency proficiency then naturally leads to the pursuit of mastery of underlying competency characteristics. A potential drawback to the meta-competency approach is the challenge of accurately capturing the broader reflection of more specific competencies in the meta-competency definition. If meta-competencies do not include detailed and inclusive definitions, misunderstandings regarding the concept presented in the competency model may result.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Briscoe and Hall, 39.

<sup>11</sup> Wong et al., "Strategic Leader Competencies," 5.

<sup>12</sup> George Reed et al., "Mapping the Route of Leadership Education: Caution Ahead," *Parameters* 34, no. 3 (2004): 53.

<sup>13</sup> Reed et al., 53.

<sup>14</sup> Briscoe and Hall, "Grooming and Picking Leaders Using Competency Frameworks," 48.

<sup>15</sup> Wong et al., "Strategic Leader Competencies," 5.



### Army Leadership Competency Frameworks

Since 1946, Army doctrine has perpetuated leadership models germane to the total force, but the Army's treatment of strategic leadership competencies as a unique category followed the business sector's interest in the late 1990s (see earlier discussion of Jacques' work).<sup>16</sup> The 1998 USAWC Strategic Leadership Primer describes thirty-four competencies under the "Be, Know, Do" construct.<sup>17</sup> A 1999 update to Field Manual (FM) 22-100 "Army Leadership" lists twenty-one competencies important to strategic leaders.<sup>18</sup> Using the research-based approach to identify strategic leader competencies, the USAWC conducted studies of Division Commanders and other junior General Officers in 2004, 2010 and 2017.<sup>19</sup> Interviews with General Officers and their civilian peers identified perceptions about general officer competencies addressing behavioral imperatives, strengths and weaknesses portrayed by these strategic leaders. Taking a similar approach, in 2011 the Army Research Institute published a report titled "Identification of Brigade Command Competencies" that prioritized thirty-nine competencies essential to the success of a brigade commander.<sup>20</sup> The report further distinguished between "commandership" and "strategic leadership" competencies. Although thorough and insightful, the strategic leader competency frameworks developed by these studies proved too comprehensive and did not clarify the essential competencies useful for the development of CCAP evaluation instruments.

More practical for CCAP consideration are Army studies that identify leadership meta-competencies. While the 2001 Army

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<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey D. Horey et al., "Competency Based Future Leadership Requirements," Technical Report (U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, July 2004), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Magee, *Strategic Leadership Primer*.

<sup>18</sup> Eric K. Shinseki, "FM 100-22 Army Leadership" (U.S. Army, August 1999), <https://www.armyheritage.org/images/Education/FMs/FM%2022-100%20Aug99.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> "Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2004" (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, November 5, 2004); Walter F. Ulmer, "Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010" (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, January 20, 2011); Craig Bullis, "U.S. Army General Officer Leadership Attributes" (Carlisle Barracks, PA, February 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Heather M. K. Wolters, Patrick O'Shea, Laura A. Ford, Matthew S. Fleisher, Mary A. Adeniyi, Clair E. Conzelman, and Russell J. Webster, "Identification of Brigade Command Competencies" (United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, June 2011).

Training and Leader Development Officer Panel study did not single out strategic leadership, its noteworthy contribution is the distillation of a myriad of important leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities into two essential meta-competencies: self-awareness and adaptability.<sup>21</sup> A 2004 Army Research Institute study implementing a strategy-based competency framework approach completed a comprehensive review of behavioral science literature, leadership doctrine, leadership theory, core functions of Army leadership, and projections of future operating environments to propose eight meta-competencies essential to the Army leader of 2025 aligned under the acronym “LEVERAGE”: leading others to succeed, exemplifying sound values and behaviors, vitalizing a positive climate, ensuring a shared understanding, reinforcing growth in others, arming self to lead, guiding successful outcomes, and extending influence.<sup>22</sup> In response to the CSA commission to evaluate strategic leadership in the post-9/11 environment, Leonard Wong and his colleagues were the first to apply a meta-competency framework exclusively to Army strategic leadership.<sup>23</sup> Using a combination of research and values-based competency framework approaches, this study identified six meta-competencies essential to strategic leadership: identity, mental agility, cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity, world-class warrior, and professional astuteness.<sup>24</sup> Detailed definitions of these meta-competencies are listed in Table 2.

In summary, a competency framework is not developed as an end unto itself. It is not an organizational talisman that ensures the success of executive leadership. Practically speaking, a well-crafted competency framework helps leaders understand the essence of “what I have to do” and helps organizations have a common language to communicate what needs to be emphasized

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<sup>21</sup> “The Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer Study: Report to the Army” (U.S. Department of the Army, 2001), <http://www.army.mil/atldp>.

<sup>22</sup> Heather M. K. Wolters, Patrick G. O’Shea, Laura A. Ford, Matthew S. Fleisher, Mary A. Adeniyi, Clair E. Conzelman, and Webster, Russell J., “Identification of Brigade Command Competencies” (Alexandria, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Sciences, June 2011), 6.

<sup>23</sup> Wong et al., “Strategic Leader Competencies.”

<sup>24</sup> Wong et al., 5–11.

and de-emphasized.<sup>25</sup> For the Army, competency frameworks focused on how the functions of leadership help align training, development, and performance management processes.<sup>26</sup>

Meta-Competency	Definition
<i>Identity</i>	The ability to gather feedback on oneself, form self-perceptions, change self-perceptions as needed, and understand the self-concept as it relates to the Army values and the individual's role in the Army.
<i>Mental Agility</i>	The ability to adjust based on changes in the environment and efficiently gather and apply information in the future; adaptability.
<i>Cross-Cultural Savvy</i>	The ability to understand other cultures, interact in a multi-national environment, and understand other perspectives without losing sight of U.S. Army values.
<i>Interpersonal Maturity</i>	The ability to build relationships outside of the formation and empower others and includes skills at consensus building and negotiation; the ability to analyze, challenge, and change an organizational culture; and develop the Army's future strategic leaders.
<i>World-Class Warrior</i>	Understanding full spectrum operations including Joint, Interagency, Inter-governmental, and Multinational (JIIM) operations; theater and campaign strategy; and the use of all elements available to the leader.
<i>Professional Astuteness</i>	Serving the nation; developing future leaders; understanding the Army constituents, compromise, and political savvy; and maintaining the expertise of the Officer Corps.

Table 2. Strategic Leader Meta-competencies (adapted Wong et al.)

<sup>25</sup> Briscoe and Hall, "Grooming and Picking Leaders Using Competency Frameworks," 39.

<sup>26</sup> Horey et al., "Competency Based Future Leadership Requirements," vii.

### Competency Malleability

While CCAP's focus is the assessment of strategic leadership capability, it is also important to understand whether an evaluated meta-competency is malleable. Malleability refers to the degree to which a competency can be taught and learned. Luthans and Youssef describe these constructs on a scale ranging from *traits* at one end to *states* at the other.<sup>27</sup> Traits are stable and very difficult to change, like genetic characteristics or certain cognitive abilities. States are temporary and very changeable, like emotions or pleasure. If a competency is on the trait side of the scale, the Army can do little to change the presence (or absence) of such constructs in aspiring strategic leaders and must select officers accordingly. If a competency tends towards the state side of the scale, then the Army can expect to cultivate the attribute in an officer through training, education, or job experience.<sup>28</sup> As the Army initiates longitudinal assessments across an officer's career, insights into the malleable nature of strategic leadership will help inform optimal assessment timelines, officer development, and career coaching.

### Competency Measurement

The Army leadership competency frameworks described previously were designed primarily to support a systematic approach to leader and strategic leader development. While important, the focus of this project is not strategic leader development, but rather strategic leader assessment. It seeks to use a competency framework to guide evaluation of strategic leader talent and prediction of officer performance in strategically demanding assignments. To this end, the identification of strategic leader competency measures that evaluate officer talent are paramount.

The concept of employing competency measurement to identify the best people for challenging jobs is not new. Throughout history, businesses and other organizations have

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<sup>27</sup> Fred Luthans and Carolyn Youssef, "Emerging Positive Organizational Behavior," *Journal of Management* 33, no. 3 (2007): 326.

<sup>28</sup> Susan G. Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes: Personnel Development in the U.S. Army*, Research Report, RR-1583-A (Santa Monica, Calif: RAND, 2018), 24.

sought to achieve an edge over their competitors, including in the realm of acquiring the most competent people available. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of using individual assessments to identify talented workers blossomed as fields such as Industrial and Organizational Psychology emerged.<sup>29</sup>

The extension of competency assessments to senior executives is a more recent phenomenon. In a 2013 assessment practices benchmark study of ninety-five large, multi-national companies, Church and Rotolo examined the assessment practices of companies with regard to their senior executives and high potential employees. Their study determined that over 70% of the companies in the survey used some type of assessments within their organization. Of those companies using assessments, 90% of them targeted their senior executives. The most commonly employed assessment instruments utilized were 360-degree feedback (66%), personality inventories (66%), and one-on-one interviews (59%). Additionally, some companies used interactive simulations, cognitive ability tests, and assessment centers to evaluate their senior leaders.<sup>30</sup>

Competency measurement falls within the discipline of psychometrics. Psychometrics is the field of study concerned with the theory and technique of psychological measurement, which includes the measurement of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and personality traits.<sup>31</sup> It involves two major research tasks: 1) the construction of instruments and 2) procedures for measurement and the development and refinement of theoretical approaches to measurement.<sup>32</sup> Effective evaluation measures establish a correlation between scores on a test instrument and subsequent job performance.<sup>33</sup> Effective measures also evidence both reliability and validity. Reliability refers to consistency or reproducibility of a measurement, while validity refers to whether

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<sup>29</sup> Allan H. Church and Christopher T. Rotolo, "How Are Top Companies Assessing Their High-Potentials and Senior Executives? A Talent Management Benchmark Study.," *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 65, no. 3 (2013): 201., <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034381>.

<sup>30</sup> Church and Rotolo, 207, 210-11.

<sup>31</sup> "Psychometrics - AssessmentPsychology.Com," accessed February 12, 2020, <http://www.assessmentpsychology.com/psychometrics.htm>.

<sup>32</sup> "Psychometrics - AssessmentPsychology.Com."

<sup>33</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 4.

a measure assesses what it intends or purports to measure.<sup>34</sup> Simply stated, effective measures of competency must be narrowly defined.

*Herein lies a paradox for CCAP design* – while meta-competency frameworks are best to guide an organization and its leaders, measuring and assessing desired strategic leader talent requires a focus on narrowly defined underlying constructs – very specific psychological concepts or variables.<sup>35</sup> Further, because of the multi-dimensional nature of meta-competencies, they encompass a range of overlapping skills and abilities. Therefore, a meta-competency cannot be evaluated through a single measure – a compilation of instruments that measure the meta-competency’s numerous underlying constructs is required to effectively evaluate a meta-competency.

Establishment of a meta-competency framework is important to guide CCAP design and help aspiring strategic leaders understand the essence of “what they need to be.” Once meta-competencies are defined, the associated characteristics must be evaluated for measurable psychological constructs. An investigation of existing measures for identified constructs can then drive the development of new instruments to assess officer strategic leadership capability during CCAP.

### **Approach**

As the team prepared to respond to the ATMTF tasking, it identified an abundance of literature, research, and subject matter expert opinion addressing the topic of strategic leadership. It recognized the ATMTF challenge was not about discovering new information about strategic leadership, but rather a problem of synthesizing existing strategic leadership literature to determine its significance. To identify the essential competencies for strategic leadership, the team consolidated vast amounts of expert information to analyze commonalities. While Dr. Wong and his team took a similar approach in their seminal report on Army strategic leadership in 2003, this report incorporates volumes of

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<sup>34</sup> Mary J. Allen and Wendy M. Yen, *Introduction to Measurement Theory*, Reissued (Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 2002) as quoted in; Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 5.

research published since that time.<sup>36</sup> While Dr. Wong's report was designed to inform the Army leader development system, this report is designed to inform the Army talent management system. To that end this report addresses the following questions:

- *Which meta-competencies and supporting characteristics define the essence of Army strategic leadership?*
- *Which characteristics of Army strategic leadership are malleable?*
- *Which existing instruments can measure Army strategic leadership capability?*

To answer these questions, the team conducted a thorough literature review of over one-hundred publications across such varied fields as military leadership, business management and leadership, organizational psychology, psychometrics, and other behavioral science fields. That review included both national and international publications to gain a broad understanding of the characteristics which make up the most effective leaders. Also studied were relevant research publications by the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral Sciences and commissioned studies produced by the USAWC. Additionally, the team reviewed the unpublished work from subject matter experts within the ATMTF to include representatives from USAWC, the United States Military Academy Department of Behavioral Science, the Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis, and the Army People Assessment Analytics Center.

As a result of this work, the team identified over one hundred characteristics important for strategic leadership, systematically evaluated commonalities in the findings and distilled the characteristics down to dozens of competencies most critical for Army strategic leaders. Using the list of important competencies, the team evaluated the interrelationships of associated knowledge, skills, and abilities to develop six meta-competencies essential for strategic leadership. These six meta-competencies follow: Exercise Mental Agility, Formulate Powerful Vision, Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions, Build Successful Teams, Communicate Effectively, and Demonstrate Ethical Ambition (see

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<sup>36</sup> Wong et al., "Strategic Leader Competencies."

Table 3). These meta-competencies are addressed in detail in Chapters 3-8.

Work proceeded to develop comprehensive definitions for each meta-competency that describe the array of its component characteristics. For the purpose of informing assessments, existing literature is used to identify underlying psychological constructs. The report then evaluates whether the constructs are malleable and measurable. For those characteristics deemed to be malleable, the team explored which interventions (e.g. training, education, or specific work experience) were thought to be most effective at developing these characteristics. For each construct evaluated, this report identifies existing measurement tools for use in officer assessment. If no tools are available, the report suggests alternate assessment strategies.



Meta-Competency	Definition	Underlying Characteristics
<i>Exercise Mental Agility</i>	Deftly adjust thinking approach based on a rapidly changing environment to effectively identify creative solutions to problems in complex and adaptive systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence</li> <li>• Intellectual Curiosity</li> <li>• Systems Thinking and Understanding</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> </ul>
<i>Formulate Powerful Vision</i>	Creatively analyze organizational complexities to synthesize a clear and novel picture of the future that drives individuals to achieve institutional objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic thinking</li> <li>• Innovation and Creativity</li> <li>• Strategic Change Management</li> </ul>
<i>Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions</i>	Apply multi-domain knowledge and experience to make or shape appropriate, logical conclusions at the proper time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise</li> <li>• Initiative</li> </ul>
<i>Build Successful Teams</i>	Effectively understand, organize, manage, develop, and motivate groups of internal and external talented experts from diverse backgrounds to achieve strategic organizational objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>• Negotiation Skills</li> <li>• Cross-Cultural Competence</li> <li>• Develop and Motivate Others</li> </ul>
<i>Communicate Effectively</i>	Accurately assess a diverse audience and clearly articulate a desired message to both internal and external stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written and Oral Communication</li> <li>• Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>• Cross-Cultural Competence</li> <li>• Lead Up and Out</li> </ul>
<i>Demonstrate Ethical Ambition</i>	Passionately honor moral and ethical values, personal aspiration, and those organizational needs that determine institutional excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral and Ethical Conduct</li> <li>• Self-Efficacy</li> <li>• Conscientiousness</li> <li>• Resilience</li> </ul>

Table 3. Six Strategic Leader Meta-Competencies

## CHAPTER 3. EXERCISE MENTAL AGILITY

*Stephen Banks*

Exercise Mental Agility is the ability to deftly adjust one's thinking approach based on a rapidly changing environment to effectively identify creative solutions to problems in complex and adaptive systems. Exercise Mental Agility can be viewed as a holistic way of looking at problems or situations from a fresh perspective that account for how a system's constituent parts interrelate and how systems work over time and within the context of other systems. The characteristics that support Exercise Mental Agility are intelligence, intellectual curiosity, systems thinking and understanding, and adaptability. This meta-competency has been identified in earlier research. Wong and his team defined a meta-competency of mental agility as "the ability to adjust based on changes in the environment and efficiently gather and apply information in the future; adaptability."<sup>37</sup> This report downplays the focus on efficiency and instead highlights the concept of effectiveness and creativity.

A meta-competency that includes the ability to think creatively and within a systems-based framework may appear somewhat counterintuitive, but strategic leaders must be able to adjust thinking based on the type of problem at hand. It is the mental agility and discipline to balance creativity and systems-based thinking which enables senior leaders to develop solutions for complex problems. When describing the strategic environment, the USAWC has used the terms volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA).<sup>38</sup> The strategic portion of this meta-characteristic highlights the importance of considering non-Army and even non-military solutions from joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multinational (JIIM) organizations applying diplomatic, informational, and economic (DIME) elements of national power to solve problems.

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<sup>37</sup> Wong et al., 6.

<sup>38</sup> "Who First Originated the Term VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity)? - USAHEC Ask Us a Question," accessed February 11, 2020, <http://usawc.libanswers.com/faq/84869>.

## Intelligence

Intelligence is a characteristic of Exercise Mental Agility that consists of the constructs of general mental ability and fluid intelligence. General mental ability (GMA) is the ability to “catch on,” “make sense” of things, or “figure out” what to do and has a strong relationship with the performance of complex jobs.<sup>39</sup> Fluid intelligence is another aspect of intelligence, describing “flexibility of mind,” “anticipating or adapting to uncertain or changing situations,” the “ability to apply multiple perspectives and approaches,” or “the capacity to think logically and solve problems in novel situations, independent of acquired knowledge.”<sup>40</sup> Taken together, these two aspects describe someone who quickly catches on to new ideas, can adapt to uncertain situations and thinks logically to solve problems in new situations.

Intelligence provides a hedge for the success of leaders at the strategic level who operate in an environment with more breadth and complexity than at the unit leadership level.<sup>41</sup> Complexity is introduced in part by the diversity of the people and organizations with which leaders at the strategic level interact and the novel problems which strategic leaders must solve. Interactions at this level go beyond the military and reach across joint and foreign services, to include civilian governmental and non-governmental organizations and inherent interaction with political organizations, politicians, and their staffs. Problems at this level are significant and the cost of failure to solve one can be catastrophic. Failure can have a long-reaching impact on the nation’s participation in a future conflict.<sup>42</sup>

There is significant research on the malleability of intelligence. Studies have consistently shown that GMA is

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<sup>39</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 12.

<sup>40</sup> James C. McConville, “ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession” (Headquarters, Department of the Army, November 2019), 4-5. Christopher Bergland, “Too Much Crystallized Thinking Lowers Fluid Intelligence,” *Psychology Today*, accessed February 10, 2020, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201312/too-much-crystallized-thinking-lowers-fluid-intelligence>.

<sup>41</sup> Silas Martinez and Tom Galvin, “Leadership at the Strategic Level” in *Strategic Leadership Primer for Senior Leaders, Fourth Edition*, ed. Tom Galvin and Dale Watson (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2019) 2.

<sup>42</sup> Martinez and Galvin, “Leadership at the Strategic Level,” 3-4.

relatively fixed but grows over a lifetime until natural mental decline which typically begins at sixty to seventy years of age. Fluid intelligence peaks much earlier for most people, reaching its heights in the mid-twenties and declining thereafter.<sup>43</sup> Intelligence, therefore, is trait-like, but this malleability is impacted primarily by the age of the person. This means the Army must select for intelligence during assessment rather than plan to train it into strategic leaders.

The measurement of intelligence through standardized GMA tests, sometimes measured as an intelligence quotient (IQ), has been labeled as biased and therefore are politically unacceptable for measurement of GMA.<sup>44</sup> There are, however, several common measures that can be used as a surrogate for GMA such as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), SAT (formerly that Scholastic Aptitude Test), ACT (formerly American College Testing), or the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).<sup>45</sup> There is some concern regarding the use of these tests as a surrogate for GMA since they are constructed specifically to determine an individual's qualification for enlistment into the U.S. military (ASVAB), the level of preparedness for undergraduate (SAT and ACT) or graduate studies (GRE) rather than as a measure of GMA. Taking into account the purpose of the GRE, the ATMTF has decided to use GRE scores as intended to target captains for developmental opportunities such as advanced civil schooling or as a prerequisite for professional military education (PME) courses that produce graduate degrees.<sup>46</sup> Tools such as the McQuaig Mental Agility Test which claims to measure "an individual's speed of thought, general mental agility and several key components of 'intelligence' against job requirements" can measure mental agility.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Bouchard, "Book Review: Bias in Mental Testing," *Applied Psychological Measurement* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 404.

<sup>45</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Silas Martinez, conversation with the author, April 2, 2020.

<sup>47</sup> "The McQuaig Mental Agility Test (Prev. McQuaig Occupational Test)," accessed February 10, 2020, <https://mcquaig.co.uk/psychometric-system/tools/mcquaig-mental-agility-test/>.

## Intellectual Curiosity

The next characteristic of Exercise Mental Agility is intellectual curiosity, which describes a self-taught person committed to lifelong learning. A survey of global leadership qualities describes this characteristic as inquisitiveness.<sup>48</sup> Army doctrine includes curiosity as a subset of mental agility.<sup>49</sup> The literature highlights this as a separate characteristic of Exercise Mental Agility for strategic leaders due to the drastic change in echelon many strategic leaders go through as they transition from the tactical to the strategic level. This transition requires a person able to apply multiple elements of national power to solve strategic problems.<sup>50</sup>

The increase in complexity when transitioning to the joint-level is so drastic that the Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Officer Management Program, per the Goldwater-Nichols National Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, mandates personnel to attend a ten-week Joint Professional Military Education, Phase II program (JPME II) before serving in joint commands.<sup>51</sup> However, ten weeks of education on joint processes cannot possibly prepare a leader for the strategic level; the leader must be sufficiently curious and capable of self-education to succeed at the strategic level.

Intellectual curiosity is a non-malleable characteristic. This characteristic is linked to the five-factor model trait of openness from which it inherits its non-malleability.<sup>52</sup> One study provided an alternate measurement of intellectual curiosity, but did not consider its malleability.<sup>53</sup> Due to the linkage of intellectual

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<sup>48</sup> Tiina Jokinen, "Global Leadership Competencies: A Review and Discussion," *Journal of European Industrial Training* 29, no. 3 (2005): 206.

<sup>49</sup> James C. McConville, "ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession" (Headquarters, Department of the Army, November 2019), 4-1.

<sup>50</sup> William J Davis, "What Makes the JIIM so Different?" *InterAgency Journal*, Vol. 8, no. 4 (2017): 9.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth Pisel, "JPME II Available at Satellite Sites," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 82 (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2016): 128-29.

<sup>52</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 26.

<sup>53</sup> Todd Kashdan, Paul Rose, and Frank Fincham, "Curiosity and Exploration: Facilitating Positive Subjective Experiences and Personal Growth Opportunities," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 82 (July 1, 2004): 7,13, [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa8203\\_05](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa8203_05).

curiosity to a personality trait, the authors determined it is not malleable.

One tool that the Army could adopt to measure curiosity beyond a five-factor model is the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory (CEI). This test provides information on two components of curiosity exploration (diversive) and absorption (specific).<sup>54</sup> As with other non-malleable characteristics, a low CEI or openness score should not disqualify an officer from serving in a strategic position, but the officer and organization should be aware of this facet of the officer's personality and build a team that includes officers to provide balance.

### Systems Thinking and Understanding

The next characteristic of Exercise Mental Agility is systems thinking and understanding. It is insufficient for an officer to be intelligent and intellectually curious; that officer must also be able to understand how organizations interact within the enterprise.<sup>55</sup> To be an effective strategic-level systems thinker, an individual must not only possess strong understanding systems thinking but must also see the big picture and exhibit a whole of government expertise. Systems thinking describes the ability to “adopt a big-picture perspective to understand complexity, deal with uncertainty, and bring about change.”<sup>56</sup>

Systems understanding is important for leaders at the strategic level as their focus transitions from internal processes to external processes and their complex inter-relationships.<sup>57</sup> The importance of understanding the big picture is highlighted by the selection of “sees the big picture; provides context and perspective” as among the top three “most important leader behaviors” of twenty-nine choices in the USAWC's Leadership Lessons at Division Level – 2010.<sup>58</sup> Taken together, this group of

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<sup>54</sup> Kashdan, Rose, and Fincham, “Curiosity and Exploration.”

<sup>55</sup> Douglas Waters, “Senior Leader Competencies,” in *Strategic Leadership Primer for Senior Leaders, Fourth Edition*, ed. Tom Galvin and Dale Watson (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2019) 65.

<sup>56</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 90.

<sup>57</sup> Douglas Waters, “Senior Leader Competencies,” 65-66.

<sup>58</sup> Ulmer et al., “Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010: A Review of Division Commander Leader Behaviors and Organizational Climates in Selected Army Divisions after Nine Years of War,” C-7.

constructs describes an officer who understands the technical intricacies of systems thinking, how the Army operates internally as a system of systems, and how the Army operates as a portion of the U.S. Government.

Systems thinking and understanding is a characteristic that appears to be malleable through instruction and experience. The difficulty with determining the malleability of this characteristic is that there is no clear definition within academic literature. Stave and Hopper offer the most useful description when they proposed a set of seven systems thinking levels that build to describe a systems thinker. At the base-level are recognizing interconnections and identifying feedback. Intermediate levels are understanding dynamic behavior, differentiating types of variables and flows, and using conceptual models. The top levels are creating simulation models and testing policies. They go on to describe the indicators of achievement at each level along with assessment criteria, but not as an assessment tool.<sup>59</sup> Until the Army or academia develop an assessment and study results over time, this categorization of systems thinking and understanding as malleable remains an unproven assertion.

One method of assessing an officer's capacity for systems thinking and understanding is the development of an assessment built upon the research mentioned above. An officer's biographical data such as civilian and military education and assignment history provide alternative indicators of an officer's level of systems thinking and understanding. The Army could generate an SAT-verbal type assessment that measures knowledge for sees the big picture and whole of government expertise as knowledge gained through experience in assignments and civilian and military education. A series of 360-degree surveys based on the Leadership Lessons at the Division

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<sup>59</sup> Krystyna Stave and Megan Hopper, "What Constitutes Systems Thinking? A Proposed Taxonomy," Proceedings of the 25th International Conference of the System Dynamics Society. Boston, MA, July 29-August 3, 2007, 17-19.  
<http://www.systemdynamics.org/conferences/2007/proceed/index.htm>

Command Level - 2010 construct would also provide an assessment of these characteristics.<sup>60</sup>

### Adaptability

The final characteristic of Exercise Mental Agility is adaptability. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22 defined adaptability as “the ability to influence conditions and respond effectively to changing threats and situations with appropriate, flexible, and timely actions.”<sup>61</sup> Both academic research and Army doctrine highlight the importance of adaptability. Research on desirable global leadership skills highlights the importance of being able “to navigate all the complex and ambiguous challenges that lie ahead.”<sup>62</sup> The Leadership Lessons at the Division Command Level - 2010 highlights the construct of being able to adapt quickly to new situations and requirements as one of the top seven of the twenty-nine leader behaviors assessed.<sup>63</sup>

The distinction for strategic leaders is the understanding that many conditions are beyond their ability to influence, but that they will still be expected to provide appropriate, flexible, and timely actions. This makes the definition from FM 6-22 more appropriate for strategic leaders: “effective change in behavior in response to an altered or unexpected situation.”<sup>64</sup> This characteristic describes the ability to deal with ambiguity and being able to adapt quickly to new situations and requirements within a VUCA environment.

Research shows that adaptability is malleable. One report indicated that adaptability “can be developed in Army leaders through training and education.”<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the Army should

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<sup>60</sup> Ulmer et al., “Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010: A Review of Division Commander Leader Behaviors and Organizational Climates in Selected Army Divisions after Nine Years of War.”

<sup>61</sup> McConville, “ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession,” November 2019, 8-2.

<sup>62</sup> Bryan Forsyth and Kennedy Maranga, “Global Leadership Competencies and Training,” *Journal of Leadership, Accountability, and Ethics* 12, no. 5 (2015): 80-82.

<sup>63</sup> Ulmer et al., “Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010: A Review of Division Commander Leader Behaviors and Organizational Climates in Selected Army Divisions after Nine Years of War.” C-7.

<sup>64</sup> “Army Field Manual 6-22: Leader Development” (Department of the Army, June 2015), 5-7, [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/pdf/web/fm6\\_22.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/fm6_22.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 90.



taylor officer training and education to develop adaptability in leaders.

While there is broad agreement on the importance of adaptability. Options for measurement include 360-degree surveys such as the simple question from the 2010 Division Command study or the more robust Agile Leader Index generated from the USAWC's Strategic Leadership Feedback Program (SLFP). The SLFP is worth noting since it enables a comparison of results between the test taker's assessment and the perspectives from superiors, peers, and subordinates. The SLFP uses forced-choice questions which "requires the test-taker to identify or recognize a previously-presented stimulus by choosing between a finite number of alternatives."<sup>66</sup> A modification to the evaluation report, which requires raters to comment on this important characteristic, could reinforce these survey methods. To prevent this from becoming over-inflated, a forced-distribution that limits the proportion of officers a rater can indicate exhibit adaptability.

Exercising Mental Agility within a systems-based framework is a critical meta-competency for a strategic leader. At the strategic level where thoughts and ideas are currency, and the ability to systematically define and link them together critical to success in a VUCA environment, Exercising Mental Agility is crucial. In an organization that is sometimes criticized for being anti-intellectual, the Army needs to emphasize building leaders who exhibit a holistic way of looking at problems or situations from a fresh perspective that account for how a system's constituent parts interrelate and how systems work overtime and within the context of other systems.<sup>67</sup> The ability to Exercise Mental Agility is important not only in the budget battles on Capitol Hill but also in strategic leaders' ability to leverage the elements of national power across the JIIM in a VUCA environment to achieve national security objectives. It is challenging to classify this meta-

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<sup>66</sup> Philip Schatz, "Forced-Choice Test," in *Encyclopedia of Clinical Neuropsychology*, ed. Jeffrey S. Kreutzer, John DeLuca, and Bruce Caplan (New York, NY: Springer, 2011), 1067–1067, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79948-3\\_183](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79948-3_183).

<sup>67</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, "The Decay of the Profession of Arms," *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed February 11, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/01/08/the-decay-of-the-profession-of-arms/>.

competency's malleability because the malleability of its underlying characteristics is spread across the continuum. The tools available to measure these characteristics range from established tests such as the SAT and ACT to 360-degree survey tools. The meta-competency of Exercise Mental Agility is necessary to effectively demonstrate the next meta-competency: Formulate a Powerful Vision.

Characteristic	Malleability	Common Measures
<i>Intelligence</i>	Somewhat malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)</li><li>• SAT (formerly Scholastic Aptitude Test)</li><li>• ACT (formerly American College Testing)</li><li>• Graduate Record Examination (GRE)</li><li>• McQuaig Mental Agility Test</li><li>• Raven Progressive Matrices</li></ul>
<i>Intellectual Curiosity</i>	Non-Malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Curiosity and Exploration Inventory</li><li>• Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness Personality Inventory- Revised (NEO-PI R)</li></ul>
<i>Systems Thinking and Understanding</i>	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 360 Assessments</li></ul>
<i>Adaptability</i>	Malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 360 Assessments</li></ul>

*Table 4: Exercise Mental Agility Meta-Competency Malleability and Measures*



## CHAPTER 4. FORMULATE POWERFUL VISION

*Stephen Banks*

The ability to Formulate Powerful Vision is to creatively analyze organizational complexities to synthesize a clear and novel picture of the future that drives individuals to achieve institutional objectives. While writing on change management, John Kotter offered that “Vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future.”<sup>68</sup> The supporting characteristics of Formulate Powerful Vision are strategic thinking, innovation and creativity, and strategic change management. This definition and meta-competency are relevant for leaders at the strategic level who will serve as leaders or members of teams consisting of participants from across the JIIM community who require a shared vision to best align their organization’s capabilities to achieve a shared objective. This is important in an environment that brings together varied planning processes, occasionally competing goals, and often confusing jargon.<sup>69</sup>

The ability to Formulate Powerful Vision for strategic leaders is different than at other levels of leadership due to the heterogeneous nature of teams on which strategic leaders find themselves. Vision at the strategic level differs from that at lower echelons, because visions they are typically broad.<sup>70</sup> This breadth enables leaders of disparate subordinate organizations to exercise initiative and thought in how to apply the capabilities and talents of their organization to strive toward the vision.

### Strategic Thinking

One characteristic of a leader with the ability to Formulate a Powerful Vision is strategic thinking. Strategic thinking helps the leader to develop an informed, relevant, and complete vision. Strategic thinking describes a leader that can think in terms of

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<sup>68</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 1996). 68.

<sup>69</sup> William J Davis, “What Makes the JIIM so Different?” 8, no. 4 (2017): 9.

<sup>70</sup> Stephen J. Zaccaro and Richard J. Klimoski, *The Nature of Organizational Leadership: Understanding the Performance Imperatives Confronting Today’s Leaders* (John Wiley & Sons, 2002). 182.

intent, oriented on the future while thinking across the enterprise.<sup>71</sup> The strategic thinker must also be able to think critically about a situation and apply skills and abilities such as reasoning, considering all aspects of a problem, and reflective thinking.<sup>72</sup>

At the strategic level, leaders must appreciate the importance of their conceptual abilities to “formulate and articulate strategic aims and key concepts.”<sup>73</sup> As mentioned in the description of this meta-competency, strategic leaders face novel problems and lead teams composed of a more diverse membership than at other levels. A leader must have the ability to think strategically to Formulate Powerful Vision that generates unified action.

Research shows strategic thinking to be a state or malleable characteristic that officers can develop. Specifically, explicit, content-specific instruction on critical thinking results in better critical thinking.<sup>74</sup> Instruction on critical thinking should remain in PME to develop future strategic leaders.

Various methods are available to measure strategic thinking. A list of the instruments identified is included in Table 5. One method is through multiple-choice tests such as the Cornell Critical Thinking Test or the Army War College’s SLFP.<sup>75</sup> Another format is an essay test such as the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test. The multiple-choice and essay methods are combined in the Halpern Critical Thinking Assessment.<sup>76</sup>

### **Innovation and Creativity**

Another supporting characteristic of Formulate Powerful Vision is innovation and creativity. The Army defines innovation as “the ability to introduce or implement something new...Being innovative requires creative thinking.”<sup>77</sup> A common method of contrasting these two ideas is that creativity is “the ability to come up with brilliantly novel ideas” while innovation is the

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<sup>71</sup> Douglas Waters, “Senior Leader Competencies,” 62-64.

<sup>72</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 16-17.

<sup>73</sup> Douglas Waters, “Senior Leader Competencies,” 63.

<sup>74</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Straus et al., 19.

<sup>76</sup> Straus et al., 19.

<sup>77</sup> McConville, “ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession,” November 2019, 4-2.

implementation of these ideas.<sup>78</sup> Another construct that informs innovation and creativity is adaptive expertise, which is the ability to apply expert knowledge to solve unfamiliar problems.<sup>79</sup> A final construct relevant to the characteristic of innovation and creativity is an openness to new ideas. In a Harvard Business Review global leadership survey, openness to new ideas ranked as one of the top ten most important.<sup>80</sup> This collection of characteristics is important for an innovative and creative strategic leader charged to Formulate a Powerful Vision. The leader cannot simply think creatively with no concept of implementation and must be able to simultaneously apply expert knowledge to a problem while recognizing that strategic problems are complex and require openness to the input from other members of the team.

Innovation and creativity are of particular importance at the strategic level due to the variety of novel problems leaders face while guiding diverse teams. The difference between the previous characteristic of strategic thinking and innovation and creativity is nuanced. Strategic thinking focuses on an almost formulaic approach to generate a vision that is in line with guidance, directions, and policies. Innovation and creativity, on the other hand, describe someone able to create new solutions and combine resources in novel ways to solve complex problems. To Formulate Powerful Vision a strategic leader must exhibit both characteristics.

Innovation and creativity appear to be non-malleable characteristics. Literature indicates they are tied to personality traits, notably the five-factor personality trait of openness which is stable over time.<sup>81</sup> As with the other trait-like characteristics, these must be selected for during accession rather than developed over an officer's career.

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<sup>78</sup> Theodore Levitt, "Creativity Is Not Enough," *Harvard Business Review*, August 1, 2002, <https://hbr.org/2002/08/creativity-is-not-enough>.

<sup>79</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 88.

<sup>80</sup> Sunnie Giles, "The Most Important Leadership Competencies, According to Leaders Around the World," *Harvard Business Review*, March 15, 2016.

<sup>81</sup> Deborah Cobb-Clark and Stefanie Schurer, "The Stability of Big-Five Personality Traits," (August 1, 2011). Melbourne Institute Working Paper No. 21/11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.191941413>.

Different tools are necessary to assess the broad constructs that makeup innovation and creativity. One option is a five-factor personality test that measures openness, with a higher score indicating a personality disposed to innovation and creativity.<sup>82</sup> Assessments for creativity include constructed-response tests and self-assessments such as the Sternberg Triarchic Abilities Test (STAT), Biographical Inventory of Creative Behaviors, and the Alternate Uses Test.<sup>83</sup> The literature did not identify any available instruments which effectively measure adaptive expertise, but the Army could develop a simulation exercise to measure this construct in which evaluated officers solve novel, hypothetical problems.

### Strategic Change Management

Current and future operating environments require strategic leaders that are adept at leading change. Although developing a vision is a step in Kotter's change management process, here strategic change management is included as a characteristic of Formulate a Powerful Vision.<sup>84</sup> This organization highlights the primacy of the vision as the unifying meta-competency that requires a leader who displays the characteristics previously discussed and displays the ability to lead strategic change.

Leading change at the strategic level differs from other echelons due to the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of large organizations. Unlike the generally direct leadership of tactical units, strategic leadership requires a leader who is comfortable leading change in an organization too large for them to directly monitor.<sup>85</sup> This is important as the strategic leader, who may have previously been frustrated by bureaucratic reporting systems, will likely have to rely on systems and bureaucracy to provide them feedback on the change process.

Strategic change management is a malleable characteristic. This assertion is based on the numerous books, articles, and

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<sup>82</sup> Stephen J. Gerras, "The Big Five Personality Traits: A Primer for Senior Leaders" (US Army War College, December 2014), 3.

<sup>83</sup> N. Pam, "What Is Sternberg Triarchic Abilities Test (STAT)?" *Psychology Dictionary*, April 13, 2013, <https://psychologydictionary.org/sternberg-triarchic-abilities-test-stat/>. Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 29.

<sup>84</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 21.

<sup>85</sup> Douglas Waters, "Senior Leader Competencies," 67.

courses designed to educate students on change management. For example, a simple Amazon search returns over 10,000 items for a search for “change management books.”<sup>86</sup> Change management is included as a class and is one of the few exercises as part of the USAWC Strategic Leadership curriculum.<sup>87</sup>

As the characteristic of innovation, the literature did not identify a tool to measure an individual’s facility for strategic change management. The best method of assessment for this characteristic is the observation of performance and surveys. It is reasonable to expect raters and senior raters to comment on the performance of an officer leading change and an officer’s potential to do so in the future. As with innovation, the Army could utilize the SLFP’s section on transformational leadership to assesses change management to augment evaluation reports.

The capacity to Formulate Powerful Vision is a complex meta-competency that consists of the characteristics of strategic thinking, innovation and creativity, and leading change/change management. These characteristics are malleable, non-malleable, and unknown, which means this meta-competency does not fall neatly into any category. To secure future strategic leaders able to Formulate Powerful Vision, the Army must continue to instruct strategic thinking and strategic change management while selecting officers with a propensity for innovation and creativity. There are a variety of tools available to measure these characteristics as indicated in Table 5.

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<sup>86</sup> “Amazon.Com,” accessed April 1, 2020, [https://www.amazon.com/s?k=change+management+books&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=change+management+books&ref=nb_sb_noss_1).

<sup>87</sup> Maurice Sipos, *Strategic Leadership Course Directive*, AY 2020 (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2019), 45–48.



Characteristic	Malleability	Common Measures
<i>Strategic Thinking</i>	Malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal</li><li>• California Critical Thinking Skills Tests</li><li>• Cornell Critical Thinking Test</li><li>• Strategic Leadership Feedback Program (SLFP)</li><li>• Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test</li></ul>
<i>Innovation and Creativity</i>	Non-Malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simulation Exercises</li><li>• Sternberg Triarchic Abilities Test (STAT)</li><li>• Biographical Inventory of Creative Behaviors</li><li>• Alternate Uses Test</li><li>• NEO Personality Inventory- Revised</li><li>• 360 Assessments</li></ul>
<i>Strategic Change Management</i>	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic Leadership Feedback Program (SLFP)</li><li>• 360 Assessments</li></ul>

*Table 5: Formulate Powerful Vision Meta-Competency Malleability and Measures*

## CHAPTER 5. MAKE AND SHAPE APPROPRIATE DECISIONS

*Stephen Banks*

Deciding is easy. Making the right decision on time is not. The meta-competency of Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions is the ability to apply multi-domain knowledge and experience to make or shape appropriate, logical conclusions at the proper time. Leaders at the strategic level face scenarios in which either they are the decision-making authority or they shape decisions for the individual or group with the decision-making authority. To cover both situations, this paper treats the two as the same, referred to as Making and Shaping Appropriate Decisions. Making and Shaping Appropriate Decisions requires a strategic leader to exhibit two characteristics: expertise and initiative. Taken together these two characteristics describe a strategic leader that can accomplish the behavior ranked as second most important of the twenty-nine measured elements in the 2010 Division Command study: can make tough, sound decisions on time.<sup>88</sup>

### Expertise

Army doctrine defines expertise as “Possessing a high level of domain knowledge and competence in an area, and the ability to draw and apply accurate, logical conclusions.”<sup>89</sup> This definition clearly describes a necessary characteristic of a strategic leader who Makes and Shapes Decisions. The strategic leader must apply experience and knowledge to the information at hand to make and shape the best decision.

At the strategic level this expertise extends far beyond mastery of Army Troop Leading Procedures and the Military Decision Making Process but must also include Joint Planning Process and knowledge about national-level strategic documents such as the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, and the budget process. Strategic

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<sup>88</sup> Ulmer et al., “Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010: A Review of Division Commander Leader Behaviors and Organizational Climates in Selected Army Divisions after Nine Years of War.” C-7.

<sup>89</sup> McConville, “ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession,” November 2019, 4-5.

assignments may also expose leaders to more niche planning processes such as the Joint Exercise Lifecycle with little formal training in its content or execution.

As the world continues to move through the information age, expertise that may become relevant at the strategic level includes digital fluency and statistical data analysis. The amount of information available today is greater than any other time in human history, but humans have not developed the improved mental capacity to process additional information. If humans are limited to Miller's concept of seven plus or minus two chunks of information that can be considered at once, then there is an ever-growing requirement for strategic leaders who have the expertise to receive large amounts of data and bin them into five to nine categories to enable analysis and application to Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions.<sup>90</sup>

Expertise is malleable as it "develops through job experience, training, and education."<sup>91</sup> For Army officers, this includes a combination of PME and operational assignments which offer the opportunities to develop the expertise. Besides these assignments and education, it is incumbent upon an officer to pursue self-development to be best prepared to perform at the strategic level.

Expertise is measurable through methods similar to those proposed for the systems thinking and understanding characteristic. One option is an analysis of an officer's biographical data including education and assignments. Alternatively, the Army could generate an SAT-style assessment that measures an officer's accumulated knowledge. A series of 360-degree surveys based on the Leadership Lessons at the Division Command Level - 2010 construct would provide an assessment of these characteristics from those who served with the officer.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> George Miller, "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information," *Classics in the History of Psychology*, accessed February 11, 2020, <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Miller/>.

<sup>91</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, xvii.

<sup>92</sup> Ulmer et al., "Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010: A Review of Division Commander Leader Behaviors and Organizational Climates in Selected Army Divisions after Nine Years of War."

## Initiative

Years of use have so ingrained the term initiative in Army culture that it appears forty-four times in ADP 6-22 without a definition.<sup>93</sup> Borrowing from academia, initiative “includes concepts such as personal initiative, engagement, proactivity, taking charge...being action oriented or a self-starter, having a change orientation, and being future-focused.”<sup>94</sup> This characteristic works in concert with the previous characteristic of expertise to describe an officer able to Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions. Through expertise, officers make and shape the best decision, through initiative, officers make and shape when decisions are needed.

Initiative is important for strategic leaders who find themselves in unfamiliar situations without clear guidance or orders but must still position their organization to contribute to achieving national-level objectives. At the strategic level, the size and complexity of the organization contribute to an initiative that may look different from that at the tactical level.<sup>95</sup> Leaders must carefully balance the risk of making a new decision before allowing sufficient time for the impact of previous decisions to reverberate completely through the system. Initiative describes a leader who acts when necessary rather than waiting for perfect information that may never arrive.

The literature review found the malleability of initiative to be understudied. Only one study showed promising long-term improvement of initiative amongst Ugandan businessmen.<sup>96</sup> Conversely, initiative is associated with the extraversion and conscientiousness traits of the five-factor personality tests, this indicates that initiative is non-malleable.<sup>97</sup> With a single study

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<sup>93</sup> McConville, “ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession,” November 2019.

<sup>94</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 64.

<sup>95</sup> Kristin Behfar and Dale Watson, “Leading Large Bureaucratic Organizations: The Internal Environment,” in *Strategic Leadership Primer for Senior Leaders, Fourth Edition*, ed. Tom Galvin and Dale Watson (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2019) 25.

<sup>96</sup> Francisco Campos et al., “Teaching Personal Initiative Beats Traditional Training in Boosting Small Business in West Africa,” *Science* 357, no. 6357 (September 22, 2017): 1287–90, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aan5329>.

<sup>97</sup> Stephen J. Gerrass, “The Big Five Personality Traits: A Primer for Senior Leaders” (US Army War College, December 2014), 3–4, <https://armywarcollege.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/institution/REP/Course%20Files/D>

indicating malleability combined with a linkage to personality traits, initiative appears to be somewhat malleable.

The ability to measure initiative comes from a combination of observation and personality trait measurement. The observation should be a combination of a 360-degree survey and evaluation report data. For example, the behavior of “can make tough sound decisions on time” from the 2010 Division Leadership study provides insight into a leader’s initiative. The five-factor personality test traits of extraversion and conscientiousness provide additional insight into an officer’s propensity for initiative.

The application of the Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions meta-competency has long-reaching impact. The scope and time horizon of strategic decisions has impacts measured in millions of dollars and years with second- and third-order effects measured in billions of dollars and decades. Measurement of the characteristics of this trait requires the development and employment of several tools including surveys and a method of translating an officer’s biographical data into useful information to determine his/her inclination for the meta-competency Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions. The overall malleability of this meta-competency is mixed as expertise appears malleable while the second is mixed. The scope and time horizon of strategic decisions has impacts measured in millions of dollars and years with second- and third-order effects measured in billions of dollars and decades.

Characteristic	Malleability	Common Measures
<i>Expertise</i>	Malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assignment history</li><li>• SAT</li><li>• 360 Assessments</li></ul>
<i>Initiative</i>	Somewhat malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 360 Assessments</li></ul>

*Table 6: Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions Meta-Competency Malleability and Measures*

## CHAPTER 6. BUILD SUCCESSFUL TEAMS

*Mark Stackle*

The fourth core meta-competency identified was the ability to Build Successful Teams. This meta-competency can best be defined as the ability to effectively understand, organize, manage, develop, and motivate groups of internal and external talented experts from diverse backgrounds to achieve strategic organizational objectives. Since almost all large organizations, including the Army, consist of numerous and diverse teams, it is imperative that an effective strategic leader seamlessly guide teams to help achieve the strategic objectives of the organization. One of the most challenging aspects of leading at the most strategic level is that the complexity and rapid pace of change within the strategic environment precludes a senior leader from being able to lead the organization alone. Additionally, at the strategic level, teams typically consist of high performing individuals with diverse areas of expertise originating from a variety of backgrounds. Only by successfully employing teams of talented experts can a leader hope to maintain the organization's competitive advantage over its competitors.<sup>98</sup>

The importance of building successful teams is recognized throughout the leadership literature. The 2010 Leadership Lessons at Division Command Levels Report identified building and supporting teamwork within staff and among units as one of the most important leader behaviors for Division Commanders.<sup>99</sup> The USAWC Strategic Leader Primer also identified senior leader team building as one of the most crucial of the strategic leader's interpersonal competencies.<sup>100</sup> Within the Business Leadership arena, Tubbs also identified teamwork as one of his seven core

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<sup>98</sup> Douglas Waters, "Senior Leader Competencies," in *Strategic Leadership: Primer for Senior Leaders*, 4th Edition (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College, n.d.), 69, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3689.pdf>.

<sup>99</sup> Ulmer et al., "Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010: A Review of Division Commander Leader Behaviors and Organizational Climates in Selected Army Divisions after Nine Years of War," C-7.

<sup>100</sup> Waters, "Senior Leader Competencies," 69-70.

leadership meta-competencies in his 2006 article reviewing global leadership competencies.<sup>101</sup>

### Emotional Intelligence

Multiple individual characteristics contribute to a leader's ability to Build Successful Teams. One of the most important of these attributes is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is defined by Dictionary.com as "skill in perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions and feelings."<sup>102</sup> One of the leading authors on emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman, described five elements that make up emotional intelligence. The first element, self-awareness, involves knowing one's own strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and the impact they have on others. The second element, self-regulation, includes the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods. The third element, motivation, comprises one's desire for achievement for its own sake. The fourth element, social skill, describes an individual's capacity to build rapport with others to move them in a desired direction. The fifth and final element, empathy, allows an individual to understand other people's emotional makeup.<sup>103</sup>

Additional authors have highlighted the importance of empathy. ADP 6-22 includes empathy as one of its five critical character attributes, and defines it as the ability to genuinely relate to another person's situation, motives, or feelings.<sup>104</sup> John Forsyth and Tiina Jokinen are additional authors who identified empathy as a crucial attribute in their writings on desired leadership competencies.<sup>105</sup>

Other authors have described two additional facets of emotional intelligence. The 2018 RAND study on the malleability and measurement of Army leader attributes included metacognition as a critical leader characteristic. The study

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<sup>101</sup> Stewart L. Tubbs and Eric Schulz, "Exploring a Taxonomy of Global Leadership Competencies and Meta-Competencies," *The Journal of American Academy of Business* 8, no. 2 (March 2006): 32.

<sup>102</sup> "Emotional Intelligence" (Dictionary.com, February 3, 2020), <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/emotional-intelligence>.

<sup>103</sup> Daniel Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?," in *On Emotional Intelligence*, HBR's 10 Must Reads (Harvard Business Review Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>104</sup> McConville, "ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession," November 2019, 2-7.

<sup>105</sup> Forsyth and Maranga, "Global Leadership Competencies and Training," 80. Jokinen, "Global Leadership Competencies: A Review and Discussion," 207.

described metacognition as a person's awareness of their own cognitive and problem-solving processes.<sup>106</sup> The final element of emotional intelligence that is critical for building successful teams is interpersonal tact. ADP 6-22 identifies interpersonal tact as one of the important professional behaviors required by leaders. It builds upon the emotional intelligence elements outlined above, and can best be described as a person's ability to "understand the character, reactions, and motives of oneself and others...(in order to) honestly state one's view about an idea or another person as diplomatically as possible to ensure it is understood without causing unnecessary offense."<sup>107</sup>

The evidence regarding the malleability of emotional intelligence is mixed. Goleman asserts that emotional intelligence improves with age but can also be increased with focused training and feedback.<sup>108</sup> The RAND study also conducted a review of the available literature on the malleability of emotional intelligence and found the results equivocal. RAND identified multiple studies that showed the benefit of training interventions to improve emotional intelligence but noted study design flaws that weakened their findings.<sup>109</sup>

The one subset of emotional intelligence where stronger evidence exists regarding malleability is metacognition. The RAND study reviewed several publications concerning metacognition in the academic and clinical settings. While not directly applicable to the business or military environments, these studies demonstrated that metacognition increases over time as an individual develops increased expertise in a field. The RAND study also concluded that there was some evidence that focused training interventions could improve an individual's level of metacognition.<sup>110</sup>

There are several assessment tools which have been found useful in evaluating emotional intelligence and metacognition. O'Connor and his team conducted a meta-analysis on the

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<sup>106</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 21.

<sup>107</sup> McConville, "ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession," November 2019, 4-

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<sup>108</sup> Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?," 8.

<sup>109</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 35.

<sup>110</sup> Straus et al., 24.



measurement of emotional intelligence and identified that the best validated tools available to assess emotional intelligence include self-report questionnaires (e.g. The Emotional Quotient Inventory; The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire), objective tests (e.g. The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test), and 360-degree evaluations (e.g. Emotional Competence Inventory).<sup>111</sup> There are more limited assessments mechanisms available to evaluate metacognition. One of the only available validated tools is the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory developed by Schraw and Dennison which is a self-report questionnaire that serves as a reliable test of metacognitive awareness.<sup>112</sup>

### Negotiation Skills

An additional characteristic that contributes to the ability to Build Successful Teams is negotiation skills. In his chapter in the Army War College Strategic Leadership Primer, Waters outlines negotiation skill as one of the central interpersonal competencies required by strategic leaders. This is because, unlike at the tactical and operational level, many key relationships at the strategic level fall outside the standard reporting hierarchy which necessitates negotiation as the primary means to accomplish tasks. He summarizes this negotiation capability as the ability to listen well, ascertain the underlying interests of the other party, and collaborate and compromise to maximize the value achieved by both sides involved in the negotiation.<sup>113</sup> Tubbs links negotiation skill with emotional intelligence as critical competencies needed for leaders to achieve effective communication within an organization.<sup>114</sup>

In support of the malleable nature of negotiation skills, Movius published a review of the literature indicating that case-

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<sup>111</sup> Reuven Bar-On, "BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory" (North Tonawanda, NY: Multi-Health Systems, September 3, 2003); Peter J. O'Connor et al., "The Measurement of Emotional Intelligence: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommendations for Researchers and Practitioners," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (May 28, 2019): 7., <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01116>.

<sup>112</sup> Gregory Schraw and Rayne S. Dennison, "Assessing Metacognitive Awareness," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 19 (1994): 472.

<sup>113</sup> Waters, "Senior Leader Competencies," 68-69.

<sup>114</sup> Tubbs and Schulz, "Exploring a Taxonomy of Global Leadership Competencies and Meta-Competencies," 32.

based studies and observational learning were the most effective techniques to improve negotiation ability. He also identified that people who were more self-efficacious improved more dramatically than those who were less so.<sup>115</sup> Taylor also published evidence that students who underwent a negotiation training course believed they had improved their skill and confidence and were able to incorporate more integrative conflict management styles.<sup>116</sup>

Despite its importance, there are no simple questionnaires or tests that can effectively assess an individual's negotiation skills. Because of the interactive nature of the behavior, the most effective assessments tools are those that involve observation. One possible technique to identify a person's level of negotiating skill would be to incorporate 360-degree feedback from those who have observed the person engaged in negotiation proceedings. Another more reliable method would be to conduct negotiation simulation exercises which are observed and assessed by subject matter experts. Fisher and Siegel recommend grading negotiation ability on the processes employed by the individual during the simulation rather than simply focusing on the result.<sup>117</sup>

### Cross-Cultural Competence

Cross-cultural competence is an additional characteristic necessary for Building Successful Teams. Johnson et al. identified multiple perspectives from which to consider the cross-cultural competence skills necessary for strategic leaders. The first involves being able to understand and work effectively with people of different genders, ethnic origins, religion, sexual orientation, and age. The second perspective examines cross-cultural competence as the skills necessary to learn about foreign cultures, being able to adapt to living in other cultures, and

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<sup>115</sup> Hal Movius, "On Teaching: The Effectiveness of Negotiation Training," *Negotiation Journal*, October 2008, 527.

<sup>116</sup> Kimberly A. Taylor, Jessica Mesmer-Magnus, and Tina M. Bruns, "Teaching the Art of Negotiation: Improving Students' Negotiating Confidence and Perceptions of Effectiveness," *Journal of Education for Business* 83, no. 3 (August 7, 2010): 139.

<sup>117</sup> Mary-Lynne Fisher and Arnold I. Siegel, "Evaluating Negotiation Behavior and Results: Can We Identify What We Say We Know?," *Catholic University Law Review* 36, no. 2 (1987): 446-447.

knowing how to interact with foreign colleagues as equals by displaying sensitivity to the processes of the culture.<sup>118</sup>

Waters further outlines that political competence within the JIIM environment is an additional view of the cross-cultural competence senior military leaders must demonstrate. He highlights that strategic military leaders must be able to understand the various actors and their unique interests and agendas in order to effectively operate at the highest levels of national and international politics.<sup>119</sup> While cross-cultural competence is important within all levels of Army leadership, it is the complexity of the strategic leader operating environment and the greater diversity of individuals working within it that necessitates a higher level of cross-cultural understanding. To support that conclusion, the Army Research Institute identified “cross-cultural savvy” as one of its six critical meta-competencies for Brigade Commanders in their 2011 report.<sup>120</sup>

There is evidence that suggests cross-cultural competence is malleable with certain interventions. One of the most effective development approaches to increasing cross-cultural competence involves experiential learning through immersion into a new culture. Ballestas and Roller studied the impact of studying abroad in a foreign country and found that students experienced an 89% improvement in their cultural competence as assessed by a validated standardized cultural competency inventory tool.<sup>121</sup>

These findings suggest that one of the most effective approaches to improving an officer’s cross-cultural competence is exposure to situations where cross-cultural interactions exist. This could be accomplished by Human Resource Command (HRC) branch managers assigning officers to a diversity of jobs. For example, HRC could take steps to ensure officers are assigned to

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<sup>118</sup> James P. Johnson, Tomasz Lenartowicz, and Salvador Apud, “Cross-Cultural Competence in International Business: Toward a Definition and a Model,” *Journal of International Business Studies* 37 (2006): 527, 529.

<sup>119</sup> Waters, “Senior Leader Competencies,” 66-67.

<sup>120</sup> Wolters, O’Shea, Ford, Fleisher, Adeniyi, Conzelman, and Webster, Russell J., “Identification of Brigade Command Competencies,” 8.

<sup>121</sup> Helen C. Ballestas, PhD, ANP-BC, RN and Maureen C. Roller, DNP, ANP-BC, RN, “The Effectiveness of a Study Abroad Program for Increasing Students’ Cultural Competence,” *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice* 3, no. 6 (December 26, 2012): 130-131., <https://doi.org/10.5430/jnep.v3n6p125>.

foreign locations, inside joint and inter-agency organizations, within civilian industrial and academic institutions, and in roles that require collaboration with civilian leaders in order to best prepare them for future strategic leader roles.

There are several assessment tools available to evaluate an individual's cross-cultural competence. The Cross-Cultural Assessment Tool designed by the Army Research Institute employs a self-assessment questionnaire and situational judgement scenarios to measure an individual's interpersonal skills, relationship orientation, cultural acuity, flexibility, and cultural interest and rates the person as Pre-competent, Beginner, Intermediate, Proficient, or Advanced.<sup>122</sup> There are numerous other assessment tools such as the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire and the Intercultural Development Inventory which have been validated.<sup>123</sup> It is also probable that direct observation by peers and supervisors would also be beneficial in ascertaining an officer's level of cross-cultural competence.

### **Develop and Motivate Others**

A final characteristic necessary for Building Successful Teams is the ability to develop and motivate others. The importance of this capability was highlighted in the 2010 Leadership Lessons at the Division Command Level which identified "building and supporting teamwork within staff and among units" as one of the top six behaviors that differentiated good leaders from poor leaders.<sup>124</sup> The same study recognized that "coaching and giving useful feedback to subordinates" was one of the top two behaviors that subordinates believed division commanders should work on.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, the 2016 Center for Army Leadership annual survey noted that "Develops Others" has consistently ranked the lowest of the Army's ten leader

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<sup>122</sup> Michael J. McCloskey et al., "Measuring Learning and Development in Cross-Cultural Competence" (United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, September 2012), 1-4.

<sup>123</sup> Deborah Schnabel, "Intercultural Competence: Development and Validation of a Theoretical Framework, a Cross-Cultural Multimethod Test, and a Collaborative Assessment Intervention" (Frankfurt, Germany, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, 2015), 23.

<sup>124</sup> Ulmer et al., "Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010: A Review of Division Commander Leader Behaviors and Organizational Climates in Selected Army Divisions after Nine Years of War," 25.

<sup>125</sup> Ulmer et al., 26.

competencies with only 61% of leaders rated as effective or very effective with another 19% assessed as ineffective or very ineffective.<sup>126</sup> The Army Research Institute's Identification of Brigade Command Competencies also highlighted that the most frequently cited differences between successful and less successful Brigade Commanders were that successful commanders tended to create positive relationships with people, including empowering and mentoring subordinates.<sup>127</sup>

The civilian literature describes the importance for strategic leaders to develop and motivate others. From an interview of 195 global leaders in 2016, Giles identified "helping with leadership growth" as one of the top ten leadership traits.<sup>128</sup> Goleman described the importance of coaching and mentoring in improving job satisfaction rates for employees and decreasing personnel turnover.<sup>129</sup> In his global leadership competency review, Tubbs highlighted mentoring others and serving as an appropriate role model as two of the most crucial aspects of leadership.<sup>130</sup>

There is little published evidence that addresses whether the ability to develop and motivate others can be improved with any specific intervention. It is likely that this characteristic is malleable and the paucity of available research is primarily due to the inherent difficulty in designing a research tool that can objectively answer the question rather than from a true lack of impact from training, education, experience, or other feedback mechanism. The authors of this report identified multiple examples where an officer's ability to coach and mentor his or her subordinates improved over the course of a career. The most effective mechanism for modifying a person's behavior in this realm derived from personally receiving direct feedback and

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<sup>126</sup> Ryan P. Riley et al., "2016 Center For Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Military Leader Findings," Technical Report (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: The Center for Army Leadership, June 30, 2017), 94.

<sup>127</sup> Wolters, O'Shea, Ford, Fleisher, Adeniyi, Conzelman, and Webster, Russell J., "Identification of Brigade Command Competencies," 12.

<sup>128</sup> Giles, "The Most Important Leadership Competencies, According to Leaders Around the World," March 15, 2016.

<sup>129</sup> Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?," 18.

<sup>130</sup> Tubbs and Schulz, "Exploring a Taxonomy of Global Leadership Competencies and Meta-Competencies," 34.

experiencing effective role modeling from more senior leaders or peers.

Like many of the characteristics and meta-competencies outlined in this paper, the ability to develop and motivate others is closely tied to other characteristics. Leaders who possess high levels of emotional intelligence, strong moral and ethical character, interpersonal tact, cross-cultural competence, and team building skills are more likely to effectively develop and motivate their subordinates compared to those leaders who lack these other attributes. As a result, it is likely that taking steps to develop and improve these other capabilities will positively influence a leader's ability and desire to engage in productive subordinate development behaviors.

Despite the lack of data supporting the malleability of this characteristic, there are several direct methods to measure a leader's behavior in this area. The Army currently requires the rating officer to assess whether junior officers are conducting subordinate feedback and goal setting activities according to Army regulation. An additional approach that could provide a different perspective on the effectiveness of a leader's ability to develop and motivate others would be to garner feedback from a 360-degree evaluation tool. This type of assessment would more accurately capture whether subordinates themselves believe they are receiving useful coaching and mentorship.

As highlighted at the beginning of the section, Building Successful Teams is one of the most crucial competencies for successful Army strategic leaders to possess. Within the increasingly complex operating environment of the future, effective leaders must be able to leverage the skill and experience of a diverse team in order to accomplish organizational priorities. By recognizing the generally malleable nature of the underlying characteristics of emotional intelligence, negotiation skills, cross-cultural competence, and the ability to develop and motivate others, the Army is well positioned to identify and, more importantly, implement developmental strategies to ensure rising Army leaders are well equipped to guide talented teams into the future.

Characteristic	Malleability	Common Measures
<i>Emotional Intelligence</i>	Mixed malleability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emotional Quotient Inventory</li><li>• Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire</li><li>• Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test</li><li>• Emotional Competence Inventory</li><li>• Metacognitive Awareness Inventory</li></ul>
<i>Cross-Cultural Competence</i>	Malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cross-Cultural Assessment Tool</li><li>• Multicultural Personality Questionnaire</li><li>• Intercultural Development Inventory</li></ul>
<i>Negotiation Skills</i>	Malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct Observation</li><li>• Simulation Exercises</li><li>• 360 Assessments</li></ul>
<i>Develop and Motivate Others</i>	Unknown, likely malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 360 Assessments</li><li>• Supervisor Assessment</li></ul>

*Table 7: Build Successful Teams Meta-Competency Malleability and Measures*

## CHAPTER 7. COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

*Mark Stackle*

The fifth core meta-competency which strategic Army leaders must possess is the ability to Communicate Effectively. This meta-competency includes more than just the ability to speak and write understandably. Instead, it can best be defined as the ability to accurately assess a diverse audience and clearly articulate a desired message to both internal and external stakeholders. This meta-competency is supported by the characteristics of written and oral communication skills, emotional intelligence, cross-cultural competence, and leading up and out. Waters outlines the importance of communication in the Army War College Strategic Leader Primer. He describes the importance of employing both direct and indirect messaging methods to ensure an organization proceeds on the desired path. He underscores that the key difference between communicating at the strategic level compared to the tactical or operation level is the size and complexity of the organization, as well as the greater scrutiny applied from external audiences. Waters also identifies that external communication is a key element that strategic leaders must master. At the strategic level, the leader must be able to write and speak clearly since common communication avenues include media interviews, public speaking engagements, and written policies.<sup>131</sup>

The importance of Communicating Effectively was illustrated in the 2004 and 2010 Division Command Level study. The ability to “see the big picture and provide context and perspective” ranked as the second most important behavior for senior commanders. Additionally, this ability was identified as one of the crucial capabilities that separated good commanders from poor ones. A related communication behavior, the “ability to clearly explain missions, standards, and priorities” ranked also

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<sup>131</sup> Waters, “Senior Leader Competencies,” 70.



ranked among the top five most important behaviors for commanding generals in both 2004 and 2010.<sup>132</sup>

Numerous authors within the civilian leadership community recognize the importance of Communicating Effectively among leaders. In the Harvard Business Review, Giles published the importance of communicating often and openly as one of the six most important leadership competencies in her survey of 195 senior leaders.<sup>133</sup> Tubbs also emphasized the value of communication when he identified it as one of his seven critical meta-competencies for global leaders.<sup>134</sup>

### **Written and Oral Communication**

Like with the other meta-competencies, there are a multitude of supporting personal characteristics which empower the ability to Communicate Effectively. These characteristics include the ability to write and speak clearly. Fundamental communication skills are malleable states and one of the most teachable leader characteristics. With instruction, practice, and experience, individuals can improve their speaking and writing skills over time. The Army has recognized the importance of educating officers in these areas. Within the various Professional Military Education schools, the Army has increased its emphasis on developing the writing and speaking ability of its leaders, including at the most senior level. At the United States Army War College, one of the six institutional learning outcomes for academic year 2019-2020 requires that students are able to, “convey complex information and communicate effectively and persuasively to any audience.”<sup>135</sup> To achieve this desired outcome, the curriculum mandates that all students complete numerous writing assignments focused on analysis, persuasion, and clarity. Additionally, each student must participate in

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<sup>132</sup> Ulmer et al., “Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010: A Review of Division Commander Leader Behaviors and Organizational Climates in Selected Army Divisions after Nine Years of War,” 2, 25.

<sup>133</sup> Giles, “The Most Important Leadership Competencies, According to Leaders Around the World,” March 15, 2016.

<sup>134</sup> Tubbs and Schulz, “Exploring a Taxonomy of Global Leadership Competencies and Meta-Competencies,” 34.

<sup>135</sup> Megan Hennessey, “Introduction to Strategic Studies and Strategic Studies Capstone Directive” (United States Army War College, 2019), 33.

multiple public speaking sessions to both internal and external audiences.

In addition to being malleable, some elements of communication skill are easily measured. Standardized tests can assess an individual's knowledge of effective writing styles, and evaluation of writing samples can identify areas of strength and weakness. Analyzing oral communication is somewhat more subjective since effective public speaking includes both verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Despite this, direct observation by a knowledgeable evaluator can provide insight into a leader's ability to articulate in an easily understandable manner. Additional measurement tools that could be useful in judging a leader's communication efficacy include 360-degree evaluation surveys and simulation scenarios involving the delivery of information to an audience.

In addition to the basic speaking and writing attributes outlined above, strategic leaders who wish to Communicate Effectively must possess the ability to understand and connect with their audience. To this end, it is imperative for these individuals to be strong in several of the non-cognitive characteristics reviewed previously. The two most crucial of these characteristics are emotional intelligence and cross-cultural competence. The aspects of emotional intelligence which drive effective relationships with an audience are self-awareness (understanding your own strengths, weakness, and how they impact others), self-regulation (ability to control personal impulses and moods), and social skill (aptitude for building rapport with others in order to move them in a desired direction).<sup>136</sup>

The complementary characteristic of cross-cultural competence further aids a person's ability to establish a useful bond with an audience. Since one of the hallmarks of the strategic environment is the immense diversity of individuals with whom one must interact and influence, it is imperative for leaders working at this level to understand and appreciate all manners of demographic variety in addition to people from wide-ranging

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<sup>136</sup> Goleman, "What Makes a Leader?," 4-5.

civilian and military backgrounds. A leader who can demonstrate superior interpersonal skill in this arena will likely be a more effective communicator than one who does not.

### Lead Up and Out

Along with basic communication skills and the ability to build rapport with a diverse audience, an effective communicator must be able to translate these talents into successful organizational leadership. One of the primary means by which this is accomplished is by leading upward and outside of the organization. At the strategic level, the size and complexity of organizations demand that leaders work closely with other strategic leaders at the highest levels within the Department of Defense, other government agencies, and leaders within private industry and academia to achieve national level priorities. The ability of leaders to create networks among other leaders has been shown to not only improve the overall performance of the organization, but also generates increased leadership reputation.<sup>137</sup> Strategic leaders must be able to network effectively in order to establish collaborative relationships with stakeholders who can drive the organization's performance outside of formal command and supervisory channels.

There is little formal evidence illustrating the degree to which networking ability is malleable. However, there is support for the malleability of certain personality attributes, such as extraversion, which are thought to contribute to a person's ability to network and build collaborative relationships. RAND identified that while extraversion does not increase with training or education, it can grow with age and experience, especially in job roles that expect leaders to be more social.<sup>138</sup>

There are few validated assessment tools that can be used to directly measure networking ability, but supervisor evaluations and 360-degree surveys could help identify the extent to which a leader builds collaborative relationships both within and outside the organization. Since extraversion is part of the commonly

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<sup>137</sup> Ajay Mehra et al., "The Social Network Ties of Group Leaders: Implications for Group Performance and Leader Reputation," *Organization Science* 17 (February 1, 2006): 74., <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1050.0158>.

<sup>138</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 52.

measured 'five factor model' personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, any tests which examine these would prove useful.<sup>139</sup> The NEO Personality Inventory Revised is one of the most often used assessments to determine an individual's level of extraversion.

As highlighted in this section, the ability to Communicate Effectively is absolutely essential at the strategic level. Not only do strategic leaders often lead large organizations where it is impractical to interact directly with members on a routine basis, but the increased scrutiny and impact of public statements and organizational policies results in greater detrimental consequences if a leader cannot communicate well. Additionally, senior leaders in strategic roles must transition from leading solely within formal supervisory management chains to an increased reliance on informal relationships with peers within the organization and with other key leaders in external organizations to accomplish key objectives. The supporting characteristics of written and oral communication, the ability to lead up and out, emotional intelligence, and cross-cultural competence are malleable with appropriate training and experience.

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<sup>139</sup> Straus et al., 52.

Characteristic	Malleability	Common Measures
<i>Written and Oral Communication</i>	Malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing Sample Evaluation</li><li>• Simulation Exercises for Oral Communication Skills</li><li>• 360 Assessments</li></ul>
<i>Emotional Intelligence</i>	Mixed malleability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emotional Quotient Inventory</li><li>• Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire</li><li>• Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test</li><li>• Emotional Competence Inventory</li><li>• Metacognitive Awareness Inventory</li></ul>
<i>Cross-Cultural Competence</i>	Malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cross-Cultural Assessment Tool</li><li>• Multicultural Personality Questionnaire</li><li>• Intercultural Development Inventory</li></ul>
<i>Lead Up and Out</i>	Somewhat malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness Personality Inventory- Revised (NEO-PI R)</li><li>• Generalized Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale</li></ul>

*Table 8: Communicate Effectively Meta-Competency Malleability and Measures*

## CHAPTER 8. DEMONSTRATE ETHICAL AMBITION

*David Eckley*

Underpinning all the meta-competencies described in this report, Ethical Ambition boils strategic leadership down to an affair of the heart, not the mind. It is the secret to success described by Major General John Stanford when interviewed by Kouzes and Posner:

*The secret to success is to stay in love. Staying in love gives you the fire to ignite other people, to see inside other people, to have a greater desire to get things done than other people. A person who is not in love doesn't really feel the kind of excitement that helps them to get ahead and to lead others to achieve.<sup>140</sup>*

Ethical Ambition captures the essence of “staying in love” – passionately honoring moral and ethical values, personal aspiration, and those organizational needs that determine institutional excellence. It involves the intense desire to effectively resolve internal tensions between what is right, what is desired, and what is necessary.

Originally coined by Harvard Law Professor Derrick Bell, Ethical Ambition is a bold term that demands explanation – and intentionally so.<sup>141</sup> Effective leadership at the strategic level requires a passion and absolute love that, like this term, is uncommon. Stewarding the profession, initiating audacious action, inspiring excellence, and navigating persistent adversity requires a leader with unwavering morals and ethics, resolute self-efficacy, untiring conscientiousness, and perpetual resilience. These are fundamental characteristics for strategic leadership that provide a foundation from which Army senior leaders can Exercise Mental Agility, Formulate Powerful Vision, Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions, Build Successful Teams, and Communicate Effectively. As a meta-competency, Ethical

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<sup>140</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 351.

<sup>141</sup> Stuart Crainer, “Ethics and Ambition: An Interview with Derrick Bell,” *Business Strategy Review* 14, no. 1 (August 23, 2003): 3.

Ambition is a complex capability to evaluate. But broken down into its component parts, Ethical Ambition can be systematically assessed.

### Moral and Ethical Conduct

In a 2017 memorandum to the Department of Defense (DoD), Defense Secretary Mattis described the essence of moral and ethical conduct as “doing what is right at all times, regardless of the circumstances or whether anyone is watching.”<sup>142</sup> Of all leadership characteristics examined in the literature, moral and ethical conduct (along with synonyms honesty and integrity), stands out as the single most valued trait by employees. In a Harvard Business Review study of 195 global leaders from fifteen countries across thirty organizations, “has high ethical and moral standards” ranked number one of seventy-four qualities rated.<sup>143</sup> Studies conducted by USAWC researchers of general officers in 2010 and 2017 identified “sets high ethical standards; demands honest reporting” as the number one most important and most observed leadership trait.<sup>144</sup> Throughout a twenty-five year period, Kouzes and Posner interviewed over 75,000 business and government executives around the globe asking “what values, personal traits, or characteristics do you look for and admire in a leader?” The number one characteristic has always been “honest.”<sup>145</sup> Finally, a cross-generational analysis of 150 business leaders and MBA students identified “integrity” as a super-ordinate value, without which other assessed values have far less significance.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> James Mattis, “Memorandum for All Department of Defense Employees, SUBJECT: Ethical Standards for All Hands,” August 4, 2017, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Ethical-Standards-for-All-Hands-SecDef-04-Aug-17.pdf>.

<sup>143</sup> Sunnie Giles, “The Most Important Leadership Competencies, According to Leaders Around the World,” *Harvard Business Review*, March 15, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/03/the-most-important-leadership-competencies-according-to-leaders-around-the-world>.

<sup>144</sup> Ulmer et al., “Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010: A Review of Division Commander Leader Behaviors and Organizational Climates in Selected Army Divisions after Nine Years of War,” 25; Bullis, “U.S. Army General Officer Leadership Attributes,” 6–7.

<sup>145</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 28–30.

<sup>146</sup> Mark J. Ahn and Larry W. Ettner, “Are Leadership Values Different across Generations?: A Comparative Leadership Analysis of CEOs v. MBAs,” *Journal of Management Development* 33, no. 10 (October 7, 2014): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-10-2012-0131>.

As indicated in the Army Leadership Requirements Model, the demonstration of moral and ethical conduct is important at all leadership echelons, but for the strategic leader its absence is most consequential. While Gallup consistently identifies the military as America's most trusted institution, ethical lapses by senior leaders undermine that trust.<sup>147</sup> Recognized as a top management challenge by the DoD Inspector General in its FY19 report, substantiated ethical violations continue to plague the most senior ranks. In 2017, of DoD's 963 general and flag officers, and 1,364 Senior Executive Service members, two percent (forty-nine) had substantiated ethical violations. In 2018, forty-eight cases were substantiated within the same population.<sup>148</sup> Because America's sons and daughters are entrusted to the military profession, the moral and ethical conduct of its strategic leaders should be above reproach.

Research indicates that moral and ethical conduct is not very malleable. In a longitudinal study of college students, Bollich et al. discovered that moral decision-making process remained stable across four years of schooling.<sup>149</sup> Seiler and his colleagues found that differences in training content and methods, as well as disparate moral decision-making measurement techniques makes the malleability of moral and ethical behavior difficult to ascertain.<sup>150</sup> Although Sipos et al. suggest senior leaders who understand their moral weaknesses can regulate their behavior, Army assessments should focus on assessments that support the selection of officers with strong moral and ethical standards and enduring integrity.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Gallup Inc, "Confidence in Institutions," Gallup.com, June 22, 2007, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/Confidence-Institutions.aspx>.

<sup>148</sup> "FY19 Top DOD Management Challenges" (Inspector General, Department of Defense, October 15, 2018), 56-66.

<sup>149</sup> Kathryn L. Bollich et al., "When Friends' and Society's Expectations Collide: A Longitudinal Study of Moral Decision-Making and Personality across College," *PLOS ONE* 11, no. 1 (January 11, 2016): e0146716, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0146716>.

<sup>150</sup> Stefan Seiler, Andreas Fischer, and Yoon Phaik Ooi, "An Interactional Dual-Process Model of Moral Decision Making to Guide Military Training," *MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY* 22 (October 1, 2010): 490-509, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08995605.2010.513270> as quoted in; Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 61.

<sup>151</sup> Nate Hunsinger, Pete Sniffin, and Maurice Sipos, "Senior Leader Character," in *Strategic Leadership Primer for Senior Leaders*, 4th ed. (Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2019), 81, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3689.pdf>.



RAND research determined that interviews, situational judgement tests (SJT), and surveys are the best instruments for assessing moral and ethical conduct.<sup>152</sup> The most widely used instrument is an SJT developed in the 1980s called the Defining Issues Test (DIT and DIT-2) which can be administered online or via paper.<sup>153</sup> This test presents various ethical dilemmas and measures where respondents rank on Kohlberg's stages of moral development.<sup>154</sup> In 2005, Brown, Trevino, and Harrison developed a ten-item survey test called the Ethical Leadership Scale, which measures ethical leadership at the supervisory level.<sup>155</sup> Finally, existing Army mechanisms such as 360 assessments that solicit feedback from a leader's superiors, peers, and subordinates are useful tools for validating the presence or absence of moral and ethical conduct.

### Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the spark that ignites Ethical Ambition. The passion required for leadership at the strategic level is grounded in a belief that one actually has the abilities to be a successful leader. By definition, generalized self-efficacy (GSE) "reflects an individual's perception of and belief in his or her ability to be successful across a variety of situations."<sup>156</sup> Synonymous with "confidence," Army doctrine describes this quality as "the faith leaders place in their abilities to make decisions and take appropriate action in any situation, no matter how stressful or ambiguous."<sup>157</sup>

Considered one of the most influential psychologist alive today, Albert Bandura asserts that self-efficacy is the "key

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<sup>152</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 63.

<sup>153</sup> Jennifer J. Kish-Gephart, David A. Harrison, and Linda Klebe Treviño, "Bad Apples, Bad Cases, and Bad Barrels: Meta-Analytic Evidence about Sources of Unethical Decisions at Work," *The Journal of Applied Psychology* 95, no. 1 (January 2010): 1-31, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017103>.

<sup>154</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, "Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive Developmental Approach to Socialization," in *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research*, ed. Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings, Second edition (New York, NY London: The Guilford Press, 2015), 347-480.

<sup>155</sup> Michael E. Brown, Linda K. Treviño, and David A. Harrison, "Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for Construct Development and Testing," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 97, no. 2 (July 1, 2005): 117-34, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002>.

<sup>156</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 48.

<sup>157</sup> McConville, "ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession," November 2019, 3-2.

cognitive variable regulating leader functioning in a dynamic environment.”<sup>158</sup> Leaders with high self-efficacy approach difficulty as a challenge to be mastered rather than a threat to avoid.<sup>159</sup> Self-efficacy is embodied in the iconic “Follow Me” statue in front of the U.S. Army Infantry Hall and was the defining characteristic of Winston Churchill’s inspiring leadership throughout World War II. Despite overwhelming odds, Churchill’s memoirs describe his thoughts upon accepting the office of prime minister in 1940:

*I felt as if I were walking with Destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial. [...] I could not be reproached either for making the war or with want of preparation for it. I thought I knew a good deal about it all, and I was sure I should not fail.*<sup>160</sup>

Research indicates that generalized self-efficacy is somewhat malleable as experience accumulates over time. It is unsurprising that leader confidence in specific tasks performance increases through repetition, but empirical evidence suggests that as leaders experience repeated success within their specific domain of expertise, their confidence to achieve success expands generally.<sup>161</sup> In addition to job experience, Bandura’s studies indicate that social modeling (observing others with self-efficacy), social persuasion (receiving encouragement from others), and psychological responses (compensating for emotional weaknesses) all contribute to self-efficacy development.<sup>162</sup> Generalized self-efficacy is a characteristic that the Army can program into its longitudinal leader development strategy, but will need to assess the sufficiency of this characteristic prior to assignment to strategic leadership positions.

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<sup>158</sup> Brown, Treviño, and Harrison, “Ethical Leadership”; Albert Bandura as cited in Michael J. McCormick, “Self-Efficacy and Leadership Effectiveness: Applying Social Cognitive Theory to Leadership,” *Journal of Leadership Studies*; *Flint* 8, no. 1 (May 2001): 23, <http://dx.doi.org.usawc.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/107179190100800102>.

<sup>159</sup> “The Role Self Efficacy, Confidence & Resilience Plays in Leadership | Cleveland Consulting Group, Inc.,” accessed March 19, 2020, <http://www.clevelandconsultinggroup.com/articles/self-efficacy.php>.

<sup>160</sup> McCormick, “Self-Efficacy and Leadership Effectiveness,” 23.

<sup>161</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 50.

<sup>162</sup> Albert Bandura, “Self-Efficacy,” in *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, ed. V.S. Ramachandran, vol. 4 (New York: Academic Press, 1994), 71–81.

Multiple instruments exist to assess the presence of self-efficacy. RAND identifies three frequently used measures that involve self-report scales. They include the New Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE), the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Generalized Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale. Evidence suggest that the NGSE scale has stronger psychometric properties and is easiest to administer.<sup>163</sup>

### Conscientiousness

In the opening lines of his address to the United States Military Academy Corps of Cadets in 1962, General Douglas MacArthur famously declared:

*‘Duty, Honor, Country’ – those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying point to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.*<sup>164</sup>

Emphasized here by General MacArthur and the heart of the Ethical Ambition meta-competency, conscientiousness is the sense of duty that drives achievement and consideration of others. While literature typically treats conscientiousness as a unidimensional construct, some researchers examine various contributing facets including achievement, dependability, industriousness, order, self-control, responsibility, traditionalism, and virtue (demonstrating this characteristic’s association to previously discussed moral and ethical conduct).<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Gilad Chen, Stanley M. Gully, and Dov Eden, “Validation of a New General Self-Efficacy Scale,” *Organizational Research Methods*, June 29, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/109442810141004>; Mark Sherer et al., “The Self-Efficacy Scale: Construction and Validation,” *Psychological Reports* 51, no. 2 (1982): 663–71, <https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1982.51.2.663>; Ralf Schwarzer and Matthias Jerusalem, “Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale,” in *Measures in Health Psychology: A User’s Portfolio*, ed. Marie Johnston, Stephen Wright, and John Weinman (Windsor: NFER - Nelson, 1995), <https://abdn.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/measures-in-health-psychology-a-users-portfolio>; Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 50.

<sup>164</sup> “General Douglas MacArthur - Sylvanus Thayer Award Address (Duty, Honor, Country),” accessed March 20, 2020, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/douglasmacarthurthayeraward.html>.

<sup>165</sup> Brent Roberts et al., “The Structure of Conscientiousness: An Empirical Investigation Based on Seven Major Personality Questionnaires,” *Personnel Psychology* 58, no. 1 (February 15, 2005): 103–39, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2005.00301.x>.

RAND finds that the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance is well documented.<sup>166</sup> Of significance, research finds a strong correlation between conscientiousness and performance in jobs requiring independence and jobs where individuals have freedom to determine how to perform their work<sup>167</sup> – characteristics of jobs performed by strategic leaders. In a multivariate analysis of the Big Five attributes, conscientiousness was the strongest predictor of leader emergence and overall leadership.<sup>168</sup>

The Big Five personality index clearly establishes conscientiousness as a trait. However, research indicates that while conscientiousness is stable through adolescent and college years it can change once a young adult enters the workforce and continues to change even through the age of seventy.<sup>169</sup> Literature suggests that changes in conscientiousness are not driven by formal education and training but through responses to shifting role demands and expectations in the workplace.<sup>170</sup> Aside from alignment of assignments early in an officer's career, conscientiousness is a characteristic that the Army can't expect to develop through training or education and should select for through assessments.

Measurement tools for conscientiousness consist of various self-reporting instruments including the Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS), Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness Personality Inventory- Revised (NEO-PI R), and Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI).<sup>171</sup> TAPAS has been used to screen recruits at Military Entrance Processing Stations

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<sup>166</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 68.

<sup>167</sup> Timothy A. Judge and Cindy P. Zapata, "The Person-Situation Debate Revisited: Effect of Situation Strength and Trait Activation on the Validity of the Big Five Personality Traits in Predicting Job Performance," *Academy of Management Journal* 58, no. 4 (July 21, 2014): 1149–79, <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.0837>.

<sup>168</sup> Timothy A. Judge et al., "Personality and Leadership: A Qualitative and Quantitative Review," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 87, no. 4 (2002): 765–80, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.4.765>.

<sup>169</sup> Brent W. Roberts, Kate E. Walton, and Wolfgang Viechtbauer, "Patterns of Mean-Level Change in Personality Traits across the Life Course: A Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Studies," *Psychological Bulletin* 132, no. 1 (January 2006): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.1.1>.

<sup>170</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, xx.

<sup>171</sup> Straus et al., 75.

since 2009 and is resistant to faking.<sup>172</sup> NEO-PI R is a popular instrument consisting of 240 descriptive items measuring six facets of each of the Big Five personality traits.<sup>173</sup> The HPI consists of 206 true-false questions also based on the five-factor model of personality.<sup>174</sup>

## Resilience

Regardless of a senior leader's ethical conduct and self-efficacy, the nature of the strategic leader environment guarantees adversity will routinely test leader resilience. Resilience keeps a senior leader's love alive when circumstances are overwhelming. ADP 6-22 describes resilience as a leader's tendency to recover quickly from setbacks, shock, injuries, adversity, and stress while maintaining a mission and organizational focus.<sup>175</sup> The USAWC 2017 General Officer study found resilience as the number three most observed trait of the thirty-eight traits surveyed.<sup>176</sup> Historical figures such as Nelson Mandela, who endured twenty-seven years in prison before becoming South Africa's president, or Stephen Hawking, who remained a leading scientist despite complete paralysis from Lou Gehrig's disease, exemplify extreme resilience. A multi-faceted leader characteristic, research indicates physical and spiritual fitness, hardiness, grit, and dispositional optimism are related to a leader's level of resilience.

Studies conducted in connection with the 2011 "Program and Facility Support for Air Force Personnel and Family Resiliency" identified a strong correlation between both high levels of physical and spiritual fitness and resilience.<sup>177</sup> Koenig and

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<sup>172</sup> Stephen Stark et al., "From ABLE to TAPAS: A New Generation of Personality Tests to Support Military Selection and Classification Decisions," *Military Psychology* 26, no. 3 (2014): 153–64, <https://doi.org/10.1037/mil0000044>.

<sup>173</sup> Robert R. McCrae and Paul T. Costa, "A Contemplated Revision of the NEO Five-Factor Inventory," *Personality and Individual Differences* 36, no. 3 (February 1, 2004): 587–96, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(03\)00118-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(03)00118-1).

<sup>174</sup> R.T. Hogan and J. Hogan, *Manual for the Hogan Personality Inventory*, 2nd ed. (Tulsa, OK: Hogan Assessment Systems, 1995).

<sup>175</sup> McConville, "ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession," November 2019, 3–2.

<sup>176</sup> Bullis, "U.S. Army General Officer Leadership Attributes."

<sup>177</sup> Sean Robson, "Physical Fitness and Resilience: A Review of Relevant Constructs, Measures, and Links to Well-Being," Product Page (RAND, 2013), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR104.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR104.html); Douglas Yeung and Margret T. Martin, "Spiritual Fitness and Resilience: A Review of Relevant Constructs, Measures, and Links to Well-Being," Product Page (RAND, 2013), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR100.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR100.html).

colleagues reviewed 326 spirituality studies and found positive correlations between spirituality and well-being in 256.<sup>178</sup> Neuroscience experiments further confirm that aerobic and meditation-based exercise reduces negative reactions to stress.<sup>179</sup> An Army study determined that strong hardiness, the ability to view stress and pain as normal, interesting, and worthwhile, predicted the positive adaptability of cadets following commissioning.<sup>180</sup> Studies demonstrate that high levels of grit, the passion and commitment to overcome challenges, is predictive of elevated grade point averages, high levels of educational attainment, and the ability to graduate from rigorous training programs.<sup>181</sup> Finally, dispositional optimism, a trait that controls outcome expectations and behavior, positively correlates to goal attainment and high resilience.<sup>182</sup>

Aspects of resilience can be improved through training, but some of the constructs reviewed are non-malleable. Physical and spiritual fitness are extremely responsive to training and education while hardiness, grit, and dispositional optimism tend to be more hereditary and stable over time.<sup>183</sup> Physical fitness remains the foundation of Army individual training, and the Chaplain Corps provides extensive opportunities for spiritual growth. Research indicates that the Army Master Resilience Training program has proven effective in reducing post-deployment adjustment problems and improves self-awareness, strength of character, optimism, mental agility, and connection

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<sup>178</sup> Harold Koenig, Dana King, and Verna B. Carson, *Handbook of Religion and Health*, Second Edition (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>179</sup> Allison J Brager, *Meathead: Unraveling the Athletic Brain* (Bloomington: WestBow Press, 2015), 27–28.

<sup>180</sup> Paul T. Bartone, “Resilience under Military Operational Stress: Can Leaders Influence Hardiness?,” *Military Psychology* 18, no. Suppl (2006): S131–48, [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327876mp1803s\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327876mp1803s_10); Paul Bartone, Dennis Kelly, and Michael Matthews, “Psychological Hardiness Predicts Adaptability in Military Leaders: A Prospective Study,” *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* 21 (June 1, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijasa.12029>.

<sup>181</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 54.

<sup>182</sup> Andrew L. Geers, Justin A. Wellman, and G. Daniel Lassiter, “Dispositional Optimism and Engagement: The Moderating Influence of Goal Prioritization,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96, no. 4 (2009): 913–32, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014830>; Barbara Fredrickson and Thomas Joiner, “Positive Emotions Trigger Upward Spirals Toward Emotional Well-Being,” *Psychological Science* 13 (April 1, 2002): 172–75, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00431>.

<sup>183</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 54–56.

with others.<sup>184</sup> Army efforts to develop strategic leaders with resilience should focus on physical and spiritual health, with assessments to select officers with the desired levels of hardiness, grit, dispositional optimism.

RAND's report on leadership attributes describes the most common instruments used to measure the various constructs of resilience.<sup>185</sup> The most widely used spiritual well-being instrument is the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS).<sup>186</sup> For the Army, the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) is the primary measure of physical fitness. The Personal Views Survey (PVS) III-R and the Dispositional Resilience Scale (DRS)-15 measure hardiness.<sup>187</sup> The Grit Scale is predominantly used to measure grit.<sup>188</sup> The Life Orientation Test (LOT) and LOT-Revised measure dispositional optimism in relation to stress.<sup>189</sup>

In summary, the characteristics of Ethical Ambition are like the components of a campfire. Moral and ethical conduct are the stones containing the fire – it keeps leadership passions in check. Self-efficacy is the spark that ignites the fire – the professional

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<sup>184</sup> James Griffith and Courtney West, "Master Resilience Training and Its Relationship to Individual Well-Being and Stress Buffering among Army National Guard Soldiers," *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research* 40, no. 2 (April 2013): 140–55, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11414-013-9320-8>; Amy B. Adler, Carl Andrew Castro, and Dennis McGurk, "Time-Driven Battlemind Psychological Debriefing: A Group-Level Early Intervention in Combat," *Military Medicine*, 2009, <https://doi.org/10.7205/milmed-d-00-2208>.

<sup>185</sup> Straus et al., *Malleability and Measurement of Army Leader Attributes*, 48,56–57.

<sup>186</sup> David O. Moberg, "Research in Spirituality, Religion, and Aging," *Journal of Gerontological Social Work* 45, no. 1–2 (2008): 11–40; R.F. Paloutzian and C.W. Ellison, "Loneliness, Spiritual Well-Being, and the Quality of Life," in *Loneliness: A Sourcebook of Current Theory, Research, and Therapy*, ed. Letitia Anne Peplau and Daniel Perlman (New York: Wiley, 1982).

<sup>187</sup> Salvatore R. Maddi et al., "The Personality Construct of Hardiness, IV: Expressed in Positive Cognitions and Emotions Concerning Oneself and Developmentally Relevant Activities," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 49, no. 3 (February 23, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167809331860>; Paul T. Bartone, "Test-Retest Reliability of the Dispositional Resilience Scale-15, a Brief Hardiness Scale," *Psychological Reports* 101, no. 3 (2007): 943–44, <https://doi.org/10.2466/PRO.101.7.943-944>.

<sup>188</sup> Angela Duckworth et al., "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92, no. 6 (July 1, 2007): 1087–1101, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1087>.

<sup>189</sup> Michael Scheier and Charles Carver, "Optimism, Coping, and Health: Assessment and Implications of Generalized Outcome Expectancies," *Health Psychology* 4, no. 3 (February 1985): 219–47; M. F. Scheier, C. S. Carver, and M. W. Bridges, "Distinguishing Optimism from Neuroticism (and Trait Anxiety, Self-Mastery, and Self-Esteem): A Reevaluation of the Life Orientation Test," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67, no. 6 (December 1994): 1063–78, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.6.1063>.

confidence required to engage across organizations. Conscientiousness is the fuel that enables the fire to burn – it explains a leader’s sense of duty and mindfulness towards others. Resilience is the oxygen that keeps the fire burning – it provides strategic leaders stamina. While research indicates there is little the Army can do to cultivate these characteristics in its officer corps, the Army must leverage available measurement instruments to assess and select leaders with Ethical Ambition to fill its critical strategic leadership positions.

Characteristic	Malleability	Common Measures
<i>Moral and Ethical Conduct</i>	Non-malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining Issues Test (DIT, DIT-2)</li> <li>• Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS)</li> <li>• 360 Assessments</li> </ul>
<i>Self-Efficacy</i>	Somewhat malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE)</li> <li>• Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)</li> <li>• Generalized Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale (GPSE)</li> </ul>
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	Non-malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS)</li> <li>• Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness Personality Inventory- Revised (NEO-PI R)</li> <li>• Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI)</li> </ul>
<i>Resilience</i>	Somewhat malleable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT)</li> <li>• Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS)</li> <li>• Personal Views Survey (PVS III-R)</li> <li>• Dispositional Resilience Scale (DRS-15)</li> <li>• Life Orientation Test (LOT, LOT-R)</li> </ul>

*Table 9: Demonstrate Ethical Ambition Meta-Competency Malleability and Measures*





## CHAPTER 9. IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

*Mark Stackle, Stephen Banks, and David Eckley*

The previous chapters reveal several implications for the Army. First, these meta-competencies and underlying characteristics have significant overlap with the Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors (KSBs) identified by previous work and in use by the ATMTF. The Army is on track but must periodically reassess to ensure that they continue to assess the KSBs required by future strategic leaders. Second, the fact that some characteristics are malleable while others are not must be considered in both officer selection and their professional development. Third, valid measures do not exist for all the underlying characteristics, the Army must seek to develop them. Finally, the Army must deliberately engage its Officer Corps to ensure they understand the importance and continued use of assessments, in addition to current evaluation tools, to select future leaders at all echelons. These key implications and related recommendations are more fully discussed below.

### **Implication #1**

The findings from this report support the recent work conducted by the ATMTF and their selection of specific strategic Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors to evaluate with the first iteration of the CCAP. While the terminology used in this document differs slightly from that used by the ATMTF, there is marked overlap between the two lists and that the initial CCAP design seeks to assess the right strategic meta-competencies and characteristics (see Appendix, Table A).

*Recommendations:*

- Continue current work to target CCAP assessment approaches on measuring the strategic KSBs identified by the ATMTF
- Since the strategic environment is predicted to evolve over time, the Army should conduct a comprehensive review of the strategic leadership landscape like this one at least every five years.

- Task an appropriate group of subject matter experts to explore new approaches to continually assess the desired strategic characteristics in future senior leaders. The development of an annual survey instrument similar to the methodology employed in the Division Commander's Studies referenced in this report which seeks feedback from senior officers from all military services, senior DoD civilians, and other senior government leaders from other agencies would provide valuable insight to inform future strategic competencies and characteristics.

### **Implication #2**

This report demonstrates that certain important strategic meta-competencies and characteristics are malleable while others are not. These findings support the concept that the Army should continue to refine the synchronization of its assessment strategy so that non-malleable competencies and characteristics are screened once and those competencies which are malleable can be reassessed over the course of an officer's career (see Appendix, Table B). The Army should target its development efforts such as training, education, and coaching on these same malleable characteristics.

#### *Recommendations:*

- For those characteristics and meta-competencies which are not malleable, the Army should further study at which stage of an officer's career to conduct a single screening assessment.
- For those characteristics and meta-competencies which are malleable, the Army should further explore the appropriate timing and frequency to assess and reassess these states.
- Ensure that the Army's primary Professional Military Education sites incorporate learning objectives and programs which target malleable strategic competencies.
- Ensure that officer coaching efforts prioritize the development of the malleable characteristics within the officer corps.

### **Implication #3**

There are numerous validated assessment instruments available for certain meta-competencies and characteristics. For

others, however, there are relatively few useful assessment tools. It is critical to balance the need for precision and customization against the cost savings and more easily attained instrument validity that can accompany widely used, off the shelf testing instruments (see Appendix, Table C).

*Recommendations:*

- For meta-competencies and characteristics which have multiple, well validated assessment tools, the Army should seek to use those rather than designing and building its own.
- For meta-competencies and characteristics which lack useful existing tools, the Army should invest its assessment resources to closing this capability gap.
- For all six of the strategic meta-competencies identified in this report, an enhanced 360-degree evaluation would provide valuable information to inform officer development and selection efforts.

#### **Implication #4**

As the ATMTF has already recognized, the transition toward increased reliance on assessments to manage talent within the officer corps is likely to have a significant impact on the culture of the organization. As a result, it is absolutely critical that leaders at all levels in the Army continue to communicate with the officer corps that job performance will continue to be the most important factor when considering promotion and selection actions. It is also imperative that senior leaders continue to educate the Army on why there is a need to augment the current performance-based system with additional assessment information to maintain a competitive advantage over the nation's adversaries. Leaders must also take steps to confirm and communicate that the assessment instruments employed are as valid, fair, and relevant to real world outcomes as possible in order to minimize any perceptions that individuals or groups are not treated unfairly in the new culture of assessments.

*Recommendations:*

- Ensure that the ATMTF, Human Resources Command, TRADOC, Futures Command, and other relevant organizations

continue to provide ongoing education and justification about the transition to greater reliance on officer assessments, while still maintaining the primacy of performance evaluation for officer career progression.

- Continue to research additional methods to ensure that the assessment strategy is closely aligned with performance outcomes. It is critical to confirm that the Army's increased assessment efforts are proven to achieve superior outcomes compared to the current system.

### Conclusion

The national security strategic environment is rife with complex, adaptive systems characterized by unresolvable uncertainty. In this environment, competition persists among international agents striving to obtain or sustain competitive advantages.<sup>190</sup> The leadership skills required for success at the tactical and operational level do not always translate directly to the skill types required to thrive within the strategic environment. While all leaders must analyze the environment, think critically, learn, make decisions, communicate with others, and behave ethically, the scope and strength of these competencies must dramatically increase for the strategic leader. It is imperative for the Army to effectively grow and align crucial leadership competencies with the demands of the strategic environment in order to best foster a strategic leader's success.<sup>191</sup>

As it works to establish a world-class talent management system, the ATMTF strives to validate strategic leadership capability and align senior leader talent in sequence with similar initiatives for junior and mid-career leaders. By assessing leaders at the most senior level, the Army not only ensures it is assigning officers with strategic leadership capability to critical strategic assignments, but it also reinforces the effort to establish a "culture of assessments." Tailored assessments, combined with self-reported knowledge, skills, and abilities augment the Army's

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<sup>190</sup> Thomas P Galvin et al., *Strategic Leadership Primer for Senior Leaders*, 2019, 13, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3689.pdf>.

<sup>191</sup> Galvin et al., VIII.

current evaluation system to provide a comprehensive profile required to manage officer talent more effectively.

Assessment of strategic leadership capability requires the measurement of competencies essential to strategic leaders. In response to an ATMTF tasking, the authors completed a comprehensive literature review to catalogue an extensive list of identified strategic leader competencies. These competencies were systematically analyzed for commonalities to generate a framework of strategic leadership meta-competencies. Each meta-competency's supporting characteristics were evaluated for malleability in order to inform longitudinal officer development programs. Additionally, the report identifies existing measurement instruments to assess individual meta-competency characteristics to help shape the future CCAP. A more detailed summary review of these findings is described in the Appendix to this report.

As the Army's reliance on assessments grows, it is important to continuously evaluate the meta-competencies and characteristics essential for Army strategic leaders. It is imperative that Army leaders continue to explore the malleable nature of these strategic leader competencies in order to effectively align developmental resources with those leader characteristics most likely to develop over time. Army testing experts must continuously work to ensure that the instruments employed by the Army remain reliable, valid, and aligned with real world outcomes. If the Army can execute this effectively, it will achieve an enduring competitive advantage over current and future adversaries.



## APPENDIX

*David Eckley, Mark Stackle, and Stephen Banks*

Assessment of strategic leadership capability requires the measurement of competencies essential to strategic leaders. In response to an ATMTF tasking, the authors completed a comprehensive literature review to catalogue an extensive list of identified strategic leader competencies. These competencies were systematically analyzed for commonalities to generate a framework of strategic leadership meta-competencies. Each meta-competency's supporting characteristics were evaluated for malleability in order to inform longitudinal officer development programs. Additionally, the report identified existing measurement instruments to assess individual meta-competency characteristics to help shape the future CCAP.

In the Approach section in Chapter 2, we laid out three questions that drove our research effort. They were:

- *Which meta-competencies and supporting characteristics define the essence of Army strategic leadership?*
- *Which characteristics of Army strategic leadership are malleable?*
- *Which existing instruments can measure Army strategic leadership capability?*

The bulk of this report focused on describing and developing each meta-competency and its underlying characteristics. While each section answered the three driving questions for each meta-competency, this appendix is meant to look across the meta-competencies and provide a comprehensive answer to each of the three driving questions.

### **Which Meta-Competencies and Supporting Characteristics Define the Essence of Army Strategic Leadership?**

As explained by Briscoe and Hall, a meta-competency is a competency so powerful that it affects a person's ability to acquire other competencies.<sup>192</sup> Meta-competencies help leaders

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<sup>192</sup> Briscoe and Hall, "Grooming and Picking Leaders Using Competency Frameworks," 48.



understand critical performance expectations and provide a common language to guide development, evaluate performance, and direct selection and advancement. This report identified six meta-competencies and their supporting characteristics essential to strategic leaders in the Army. If officers demonstrate these meta-competencies, they will possess the characteristics described in the literature that best predict successful leadership in the strategic environment. Strategic leadership meta-competencies include:

- Exercise Mental Agility: deftly adjust thinking approach based on a rapidly changing environment to effectively identify creative solutions to problems in complex and adaptive systems.
- Formulate Powerful Vision: creatively analyze organizational complexities to synthesize a clear and novel picture of the future that drives individuals to achieve institutional objectives.
- Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions: apply multi-domain knowledge and experience to make or shape appropriate, logical conclusions at the proper time.
- Build Successful Teams: effectively understand, organize, manage, develop, and motivate groups of internal and external talented experts from diverse backgrounds to achieve strategic organizational objectives.
- Communicate Effectively: accurately assess a diverse audience and clearly articulate a desired message to both internal and external stakeholders.
- Demonstrate Ethical Ambition: passionately honor moral and ethical values, personal aspiration, and those organizational needs that determine institutional excellence.

In preparation for the implementation of the CCAP, the ATMTF compiled a list of Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors (KSBs) associated with strategic potential. While the KSB terminology used by the Talent Management Task Force differs from the meta-competency and characteristic framework

employed in this document, there exists significant overlap regarding the general objectives. This report’s findings support the notion that the ATMTF has identified the right elements to target for the Army’s future strategic leaders. Table A identifies Meta-Competency Characteristic alignment and their alignment with the CCAP KSBs.

<i>Meta-Competency</i>	<i>Underlying Characteristics</i>	<i>Aligned CCAP KSBs</i>
<i>Exercise Mental Agility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence</li> <li>• Intellectual Curiosity</li> <li>• Systems Thinking and Understanding</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluid Intelligence</li> <li>• General Cognitive Ability</li> <li>• Mental Agility</li> <li>• Cognitive Flexibility</li> <li>• Tolerance for Ambiguity</li> </ul>
<i>Formulate Powerful Vision</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Thinking</li> <li>• Innovation and Creativity</li> <li>• Strategic Change Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity to Think Strategically</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Creative Thinking</li> <li>• Critical Thinking</li> </ul>
<i>Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise</li> <li>• Initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological Competency</li> <li>• Cross-Domain Expertise</li> <li>• Drive Results</li> <li>• Sound Judgment</li> </ul>
<i>Build Successful Teams</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>• Negotiation Skills</li> <li>• Cross-Cultural Competence</li> <li>• Develop and Motivate Others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Building</li> <li>• Self-Awareness</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Strategic Negotiation Competency</li> <li>• Multi-Cultural Effectiveness</li> <li>• Develops Others</li> <li>• Leads Others</li> <li>• Creates a Positive Environment</li> </ul>
<i>Communicate Effectively</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written and Oral Communication</li> <li>• Lead Up and Out</li> <li>• Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>• Cross-Cultural Competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective Communicator</li> <li>• Extends Influence Beyond the Chain of Command</li> </ul>
<i>Demonstrate Ethical Ambition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral and Ethical Conduct</li> <li>• Self-Efficacy</li> <li>• Conscientiousness</li> <li>• Resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral and Ethical Leader</li> <li>• Desire to Lead</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Leads by Example</li> <li>• Builds Trust</li> <li>• Self-Efficacy</li> <li>• Prepares Self</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Achievement Orientation</li> <li>• Stress Tolerance</li> <li>• Physical Fitness</li> <li>• Counter-Productive Leadership</li> </ul>

*Table A: Meta-Competency Characteristic Alignment with CCAP KSBs*

### **Which Aspects of Army Strategic Leadership Are Malleable?**

While the establishment of the meta-competency framework outlined above is useful to identify the overarching competencies the Army should seek in its strategic leaders, it is also vital to understand that these meta-competencies are undergirded by multiple interrelated characteristics which consist of the component knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and traits which make up an individual. Additionally, this report delineates which of these characteristics are malleable and which are not.

The implications of these findings can help shape the Army's assessment strategy so that it focuses on early identification and screening for those characteristics that are not malleable and unlikely to evolve. It also allows for sequential assessment and application of developmental resources toward those crucial characteristics which have proven to be more malleable over time. For example, it would be useful for the Army to assess for intellectual curiosity once during an officer's career, but less useful to conduct subsequent screening for intellectual curiosity at later stages, such as during CCAP, since little change would be expected. On the other hand, the Army would benefit from measuring an officer's negotiation skills at multiple stages throughout an officer's career so that appropriate training and education resources can be provided to improve this malleable skill.

Analysis of the six meta-competencies and their nineteen supporting characteristics revealed that the ability to Exercise Mental Agility and Demonstrate Ethical Ambition are fairly permanent and display little malleability over time. Conversely, the ability to Communicate Effectively, Build Successful Teams, and Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions are highly malleable and can be improved with appropriate interventions. The evidence suggests that the aptitude to Formulate a Powerful Vision is only somewhat malleable. Table B summarizes the malleability of the six meta-competencies and supporting characteristics.

Meta-Competency	Non-Malleable	Somewhat Malleable	Malleable	Unknown
<i>Exercise Mental Agility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intellectual Curiosity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intelligence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adaptability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Systems Thinking &amp; Understanding</li></ul>
<i>Formulate Powerful Vision</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Innovation &amp; Creativity</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic Thinking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic Change Management</li></ul>
<i>Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initiative</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expertise</li></ul>	
<i>Build Successful Teams</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emotional Intelligence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Negotiation Skills</li><li>• Cross-Cultural Competence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop &amp; Motivate Others</li></ul>
<i>Communicate Effectively</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lead Up &amp; Out</li><li>• Emotional Intelligence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Written &amp; Oral Communication</li><li>• Cross-Cultural Competence</li></ul>	
<i>Demonstrate Ethical Ambition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Moral &amp; Ethical Conduct</li><li>• Conscientious</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-Efficacy</li><li>• Resilience</li></ul>		

Table B: Meta-Competency Characteristic Malleability

Which Instruments Can Measure Army Strategic Leadership Capability?

After identifying the six key strategic leader meta-competencies and their nineteen supporting characteristics, as well as determining the malleability of each, the authors reviewed the leadership literature to identify the existing measurement tools and strategies available to assess for the presence of these characteristics. The review was not intended to evaluate the specific scientific merits of each tool since that level of appraisal is beyond the scope of this project. The authors also recognized that there are individuals and institutions within the Army who have more extensive experience evaluating, designing, and building assessment tools. Instead, the target audience for this report are current and future Army leaders involved in guiding Talent Management programs and initiatives. The intent of this project is to provide these individuals with a clearer understanding of what should be measured and when, as well as a general understanding of the validated measuring tools in existence.

The Army has relied upon numerous assessment instruments in recent history. The Army Physical Fitness Test and Army Combat Fitness Test both measure a Soldier's physical ability. Certain Special Operations organizations have employed multi-dimensional measurement tools to select members of their organizations. The Army required regular 360-degree feedback of all leaders until just a few years ago. Within each Professional Military Education assignment, the Army has rolled out additional assessment initiatives. And, most recently, the ATMTF employed a battery of assessment tools to select Lieutenant Colonel leaders for Battalion Command with its Battalion Commanders Assessment Program (BCAP) to ascertain an officer's fitness for command. The planned initial iteration of the CCAP builds upon the success of the BCAP while focusing on leaders at the Colonel level with a greater emphasis on strategic potential.

The value of specific assessment tools depends greatly on their ability to accurately and dependably predict meaningful outcomes. It is critical that assessment tools possess internal consistency so that they yield reliable results over time, even within diverse populations such as the Army. Additionally, an ideal measurement tool demonstrates strong validity and relevance to real world outcomes.

There are additional important characteristics of assessment tools which must be considered. It is essential that testing tools remain secure and effectively mitigate the effects of social desirability bias and faking. Adaptive tests which generate varied questions from extensive question banks based on prior answers are one such safeguard. It is also imperative that any utilization of assessment tools appropriately balances the cost in time and money with the amount of useful information provided. An online, multiple choice test can be conducted much more easily than a complex role-playing simulation exercise involving multiple actors. A final element of assessment testing which must be factored in is the impact on the tested population. If the tested population as a whole does not understand the value and purpose of the test, or if the population does not believe the results are fair and accurate, the testing process can have an unintended negative impact on the organization.

This report identified a vast array of testing modalities. These tools varied greatly in their ease of use and the competencies and characteristics which they target. The most common assessment approaches relied on direct observations from supervisors; objective written tests; 360-degree feedback from peers, subordinates, and superiors; self-assessment questionnaires; personality inventories; individual or group structured interviews; and simulation and role-playing exercises.

This report also identified that each of the meta-competencies and characteristics had differing quantities and types of measurement tools available with which to assess them. In general, the characteristics that support Demonstrate Ethical Ambition and Communicate Effectively have a multitude of widely used assessment instruments available. In contrast, the characteristics of expertise and initiative which underlie the Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions meta-competency lack the same availability of rigorous tools.

The remaining meta-competencies fall somewhere in between. For Exercise Mental Agility, there are multiple approaches to evaluate intelligence and intellectual curiosity. On the flip side, however, there are almost no tools which effectively assess a person's level of systems thinking and understanding or their adaptability which also contribute to an individual's ability to Exercise Mental Agility. Similarly, the facility to Formulate Powerful Vision involves strategic thinking and innovation and creativity which are more easily measured, but also include strategic change management which is difficult to evaluate. Finally, the characteristics which support the ability to Build Successful Teams also maintain mixed assessment tool availability. There are numerous measurement tools to determine one's level of emotional intelligence and cross-cultural competence, but very few which can accurately depict a leader's ability to develop and motivate others or to quantify their level of negotiation skill.

As the Army's reliance on assessments grows, it will be critical for the Army to continuously evaluate the meta-competencies and characteristic which it seeks in its strategic leaders. Additionally, it will be important for the Army's testing experts to continuously work to ensure that the instruments

employed by the Army remain reliable, valid, and aligned with real world outcomes. The Army will also need to prioritize investment into assessment strategies which can better evaluate those characteristics and competencies which lack effective evaluation tools currently. Table 12 (next page) summarizes the existing Meta-Competency Measures.

Meta-Competency	Common Measures
<i>Exercise Mental Agility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)</li> <li>• SAT (formerly that Scholastic Aptitude Test)</li> <li>• ACT (formerly American College Testing)</li> <li>• Graduate Record Examination (GRE)</li> <li>• McQuaig Mental Agility Test</li> <li>• Raven Progressive Matrices</li> <li>• Curiosity and Exploration Inventory</li> <li>• NEO Personality Inventory- Revised*</li> <li>• 360 Assessments*</li> </ul>
<i>Formulate Powerful Vision</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal</li> <li>• California Critical Thinking Skills Tests</li> <li>• Cornell Critical Thinking Test</li> <li>• Strategic Leadership Feedback Program (SLFP)*</li> <li>• Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test</li> <li>• Simulation Exercises</li> <li>• Sternberg Triarchic Abilities Test (STAT)</li> <li>• Biographical Inventory of Creative Behaviors</li> <li>• Alternate Uses Test</li> <li>• NEO Personality Inventory- Revised*</li> <li>• 360 Assessments*</li> </ul>
<i>Make and Shape Appropriate Decisions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment History</li> <li>• 360 Assessments*</li> </ul>
<i>Build Successful Teams</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional Quotient Inventory</li> <li>• Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire</li> <li>• Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test</li> <li>• Emotional Competence Inventory</li> <li>• Metacognitive Awareness Inventory</li> <li>• Negotiation Simulation Exercises</li> <li>• Cross-Cultural Assessment Tool</li> <li>• Multicultural Personality Questionnaire</li> <li>• Intercultural Development Inventory</li> <li>• 360 Assessments*</li> </ul>
<i>Communicate Effectively</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Sample Evaluation</li> <li>• Simulation Exercises for Oral Communication Skills</li> <li>• 360 Assessments</li> </ul>
<i>Demonstrate Ethical Ambition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining Issues Test (DIT, DIT-2)</li> <li>• Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS)</li> <li>• New Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE)</li> <li>• Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)</li> <li>• Generalized Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale (GPSE)</li> <li>• Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS)</li> <li>• NEO Personality Inventory- Revised*</li> <li>• Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI)</li> <li>• Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT)</li> <li>• Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS)</li> <li>• 360 Assessments*</li> </ul>

*Table C: Meta-Competency Measures*





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## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

### Silas Martinez

Colonel Silas Martinez has served as Director of Leader Development at the United States Army War College since 2017. He holds a PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from Wright State University and is a 2015 Army War College graduate. His research interests include talent management, selection, decision-making support, and leadership.

### Louis Yuengert

Professor Lou Yuengert is the Professor of Defense Leadership and Enterprise Management at the U.S. Army War College. He holds a Master of Science degree in Operations Research from The Georgia Institute of Technology, and through his experiences during two tours on the Army Staff has expertise in programming, budgeting, and acquisition management. Professor Yuengert is a retired U.S. Army colonel.

### Stephen Banks

Colonel Stephen Banks is the Chief of the Environment Operations Division, Deputy Directorate for Joint Training, Joint Staff J7 - Joint Force Development. He holds a Masters of Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College; a Masters of Military Art and Science - Theater Operations from the School of Advanced Military Studies; an Master of Business Administration from the Krannert School of Management, Purdue University; and a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering from Purdue University.

### David Eckley

Lieutenant Colonel David Eckley is the Chief of Intelligence Current Operations (J23) at Joint Force Headquarters, Department of Defense Information Networks, United States Cyber

Command. He holds a Masters of Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College, a Master of Science in Geographic and Cartographic Science from George Mason University, and a Bachelor of Science in Mapping, Charting and Geodesy from the United States Military Academy. He has published in the academic journal Computers, Environment and Urban Systems and Small Wars Journal.

#### Mark Stackle

Colonel Mark Stackle is the Commander of the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research at Joint Base San Antonio. He holds a Doctor of Medicine degree from the Georgetown University School of Medicine, a Masters of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College, a Master of Business Administration from Pacific Lutheran University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Gonzaga University.



## THE UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE

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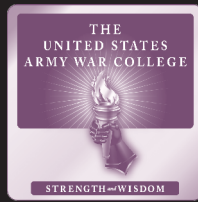
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