

Leadership & Strategy Review

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A biweekly collection of articles, comments and opinion pieces from popular media and the blogosphere, thematically reflecting the spirit of George C. Marshall's enduring legacy of leadership and strategic vision.

The ten most common strategic blunders?

Posted by Thomas E. Ricks at his [ForeignPolicy.com](#) blog

I'll read anything by Andrew Krepinevich, the fine strategic thinker who bears a strong resemblance to Dwight Eisenhower circa 1939. Right now my subway reading is a new essay he has done with Barry Watts titled "Regaining Strategic Competence." I was especially intrigued by the list of ten common strategic blunders they attribute to business strategy expert Richard Rumelt:

1. Failure to recognize or take seriously the scarcity of resources.
2. Mistaking strategic goals for strategy.
3. Failure to recognize or state the strategic problem.
4. Choosing poor or unattainable strategic goals.
5. Not defining the strategic challenge competitively.

To read the others, go to

http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/07/09/the_10_most_common_strategic_blunders

Picking a corporate leader: The crucial question almost no one asks

In an article by Gautam Mukunda, assistant professor at Harvard Business School, "Indispensable: When Leaders Really Matter," the author writes,

"Often when a company is in trouble, its board looks for a new chief executive to turn it around, frequently a superstar outsider. In the last few weeks, Yahoo! brought Marissa Meyer in from outside, and Procter & Gamble has been under pressure from investors to replace Bob McDonald. Directors describe choosing a new CEO as their single most important task, and they usually go to great lengths to find the 'best' person, often prioritizing charismatic leadership abilities. In thinking about leadership selection this way, however, they fundamentally misunderstand the problem they face in choosing a leader. Picking a CEO is not about choosing the 'best' leader. It's about balancing tradeoffs between risk and reward."

[To read more online, go to this web site.](#)

We need leaders who think like gardeners

By Major Joseph Bruhl, USA

"Leaders who think like gardeners are better equipped to adapt, reason creatively, and approach challenges with humility than those who think like model airplane builders. Unfortunately, many in the army prefer fabricating P-51 Mustangs to nursing tomatoes."

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"Model airplane building supports an 'A+B=C' mentality that is familiar to many in the military. Assemble the right tools, carefully study directions (read doctrine), and work with exactitude. For the model airplane builder, nothing is beyond his control....Gardeners, however, do not possess complete control. Their craft is affected by a host of things beyond their control. Gardeners' crop output is graded, not on exactitude, but on an ability to adapt, think creatively, and remain humble enough to try new methods. Like the gardener, today's combat leaders understand that progress can be affected by a host of things beyond one's control: historic feuds, dysfunctional institutions, and even past mistakes by U.S. forces. Here again, adaptability, creativity and humility are keys to success."

Read the longer version of his article, "Gardener-Leaders: A New Paradigm for Developing Adaptive, Creative and Humble Leaders," [by clicking here](#).

Major Joseph Bruhl is a strategic planner in irregular warfare and security force assistance at the Army's Security Cooperation Plans and Concepts Division. He holds a B.A. from Truman State University and an M.P.A. from Harvard. Major Bruhl received the George C. Marshall Army ROTC Award in 2000 at the Marshall Foundation's National Security and Leadership Seminar, representing the ROTC unit at Truman State.

America's Pacific Century

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Marshall Foundation Award recipient, writes in *Foreign Policy* about the coming shift in U.S. diplomatic strategy.

"As the war in Iraq winds down and America begins to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, the United States stands at a pivot point. Over the last 10 years, we have allocated immense resources to those two theaters. In the next 10 years, we need to be smart and systematic about where we invest time and energy, so that we put ourselves in the best position to sustain our leadership, secure our interests, and advance our values. One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment--diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise--in the Asia-Pacific region....

"What does that regional strategy look like? For starters, it calls for a sustained commitment to what I have called 'forward-deployed' diplomacy. That means continuing to dispatch the full range of our diplomatic assets--including our highest-ranking officials, our development experts, our interagency teams, and our permanent assets--to every country and corner of the Asia-Pacific region. Our strategy will have to keep accounting for and adapting to the rapid and dramatic shifts playing out across Asia....We know that these new realities require us to innovate, to compete, and to lead in new ways. Rather than pull back from the world, we need to press forward and renew our leadership. In a time of scarce resources, there's no question that we need to invest them wisely where they will yield the biggest returns, which is why the Asia-Pacific represents such a real 21st-century opportunity for us."

To read the entire analysis, [go here](#).

The private, non-profit, independent George C. Marshall Foundation, located in Lexington, Virginia, seeks to change the way emerging leaders in military service, foreign service, public administration and business are prepared in the essentials of vision, strategy and leadership.

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