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Out of the ashes of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, a leader arose. Although General Colin Powell was not a stranger to the military and political spotlight prior to the war, his leadership during Desert Storm brought him directly into the public's sights. As a result of Powell's effective leadership, his popularity grew to the point that a large majority of the public felt he should run for president. Perhaps the most interesting thing about Powell's leadership is the style he used which gained him the most notoriety.

It is only fitting to analyze Colin Powell's leadership style using the contingency theory since Fiedler developed the theory through a study of leaders in mostly military organizations. According to this theory, a leader's effectiveness depends on how well the leader's style fits the context. In order to determine the leader's style, the first thing that needs to be done is measure the leader's Least Preferred Coworker score. Since Powell's LPC score is not easily accessible, an analysis of different leadership positions in which he has been placed can give a general idea of whether Powell is task motivated or relationship motivated.

One instance of Colin Powell's leadership style is evident in the Powell Doctrine, which holds that the U.S. should only deploy military force in overwhelming numbers and in regions where the U.S. stands to gain from that force when the U.S. is virtually guaranteed victory. According to the opinions of some parties, this doctrine "is the search for the thing surest not to upset the status quo" (Meacham 4). In many other instances of Powell's leadership, he skillfully created close ties among his colleagues to obtain the best solutions for all groups involved. This technique that Powell used repeatedly in his many leadership roles is equivalent to the relationship motivated style of leadership.

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Colin Powell's relationship motivated style is further supported by his collaboration with General Schwarzkopf during Desert Storm. Essentially, Powell worked with the president, as well as other government officials, through his close interpersonal relations in order to provide General Schwarzkopf with the resources necessary to complete the task. Therefore, General Colin Powell's relationship motivated leadership style suggests he has a high LPC score. Furthermore, since LPC scores are believed to be stable over time, Powell probably still has a high LPC score.

Powell's leadership style, according to the contingency theory, is not solely responsible for his effectiveness as a leader. The leader-member relations, task structure, and position power also play a large role in Powell's leadership capabilities. Since Powell has a high LPC, according to the contingency model, good leader-member relations, a low task structure, and a weak power position are essential to the success of Powell's leadership style.

It is quite apparent that Powell had good leader-member relations. According to poll numbers for Powell's popularity prior to the 1996 presidential election, "58 percent of Americans view[ed] him favorably and a phenomenally low 6 percent unfavorably" (Meacham 2). This poll was a pretty accurate measure of the degree of confidence, loyalty, and attraction that the American public felt for Colin Powell. In addition to Powell's relationship with the American public, government officials also trusted, liked, and got along with the General. Because of his favorable association with government staff, Powell was able to produce the first major military downsizing plan, which helped to cut the national debt (Meacham 4). Thus, Powell efficiently created a positive group atmosphere between himself and his subordinates in nearly every situation he faced.

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On the other hand, the organization of the tasks in Powell's most well known accomplishments as a leader tends to be highly unstructured. In order to cut military force size and military expenditures, Colin Powell set up a small working group in order to produce his downsizing plan. This method was just one of many that Powell could have used in order to reach the same goal. Also, in his work in the Persian Gulf War, Powell had to determine the best possible way to accomplish the intended goal without any set rules. Powell did have to adhere to international laws on war, but as long as he followed those rules he had many options to decide from in order to reach his objective.

The third characteristic, position power, is difficult to determine in Colin Powell's case. Since he was the Secretary of Defense and a general, his power position would most likely be strong. Powell had the authority to hire and fire and give raises in rank or pay to those ranked lower than he, but in the instances of his military downsizing plan and Desert Storm, General Powell worked with people of higher rank, the president, or of higher rank, General Schwarzkopf. In both of these situations, Powell did not have the power to hire or fire, and thus was in a weak power position.

The Persian Gulf War and the need to cut spending within the military were both difficult situations in which General Colin Powell effectively led his subordinates to their goal. After using the contingency theory to analyze Powell's leadership style, it appears that Powell's relationship motivated style is very effective. However, Colin Powell has also exhibited task motivated leadership effectively in certain situations. This inconsistency is a common criticism of the contingency theory "because it fails to explain fully why individuals with certain leadership styles are more effective in some situations than others" (Northouse 114).

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Since it is apparent that Colin Powell's leadership style tends to change with the situation, perhaps analyzing Powell using the situational approach can offer more information. This approach deals with the directive and supportive behavior that must be applied to a given situation. In other words, General Powell matches his style of leadership to the proficiency of the subordinates.

Similar to the contingency theory, the leadership styles of the situational approach is based on task and relationship. Here, however, task motivated leadership is referred to as directive behavior, and relationship motivated leadership is referred to as supportive behavior. As the definition of the situational approach points out, the behavior can change depending on the situation, and the subordinates. This ability to move back and forth between behaviors compensates for the inconsistency in the contingency theory.

For instance, Colin Powell exhibited directive behavior as head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) by "giving directions, establishing goals and methods of evaluation, setting time lines, defining roles, and showing how the goals are to be achieved" (Northouse 89). If it were not for his task oriented leadership style in this situation, Powell's plan for military downsizing would not have been successful. As new steps were reached within Powell's plan his leadership style changed to fit the new situation.

During the initial installation of his plan, Powell had to use a high directive-low supportive, or directing, style of leadership. At this point in the process, Powell focused on the goal by proposing the complete plan Bush and Cheney in 1990. As the project proceeded, Powell turned his attention towards the goal achievement and the maintenance of his subordinates' needs. Finally, Powell used a supporting approach, which led to a delegating

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approach. As a result of his flexibility, General Powell's plan was able to make a 20 to 25 percent reduction in military expenditures (Meacham 4).

It appears that the situational approach offers a great explanation of General Colin Powell's leadership style. Powell changed his leadership style as he reached new points within his military downsizing plan. However, a problem comes up in this approach as well. Here, the subordinates' levels of commitment and competence change. The situational approach does make an attempt at solving this problem by assigning developmental levels, but it is not clear how the developmental levels are formed.

Bibliography

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