

Sir winston churchill's leadership traits



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Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (Churchill) was an aristocrat from United Kingdom (UK) who lived in the two great wars, World War I (WWI) and World War II (WWII). He was once the most inspiring leader particularly as a political leader and was portrayed during Europe succumbed to Hitler, London bombing and after UK experience some major military defeats. He managed to inspire the nation to continue enduring the suffering and fight on; inspire confidence in the ability to win; and to make unusual sacrifices to achieve his well communicated vision. Churchill was also known for his boldness and courage in making difficult decision. Nevertheless, this great leader also had his up and down throughout his career and on occasion to switch side when he felt that what his fighting for were in vain. After eliminated all obstacles in life, Churchill live his life with distinction and die with honour.

By definition, military leadership is an art of influencing and directing men in such way as to obtain their willing obedience, confidence, respect and loyal co-operation to accomplish the mission[1]. Leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership attributes such as knowledge, charisma, courage, initiative, enthusiasm, revolutionary, futuristic and willpower. In this paper, we will look at the outstanding and unforgettable Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, who has unified and led Britain to be the only nation that survives in the World War 2 (WW2).

AIM

2. The aim of this paper is to analyse the leadership traits of Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill as a Prime Minister of Great Britain during WW2.

SCOPE

3. The scope of this paper will be as follows:

- a. Background.
- b. Military career.
- c. Involvement in politic.
- d. Achievements and failures.
- e. Analysis of his leadership traits.
- f. Conclusion.
- g. Recommendation.

BACKGROUND

4. Winston Churchill was born on the 30 Nov 1874 at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, England. He grew up in the late 1800s, the era of which no radios, televisions or electronic devices available. At that time, most of the children spent their time by reading books and playing with toy soldiers. His father, Lord Randolph Churchill was a conservative British's autocrat and a direct descendant from the 7th Duke of Marlborough. His mother, Jennie Jerome, an American who was the ancestor of group which fought for the American colonies independence in George Washington's army.

Academically, he received his first education at St George School, Ascot from 1882 to 1884. He then attended the Misses Thompson's Preparatory School where he fulfilled his interest in French, history, poetry, horse riding and swimming. In April 17th 1888, Winston enrolled himself at a boy's school -

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Harrow, near London. Originally, Winston Churchill wasn't a genius student. He was at the bottom of his class and there was no clue at all that one day, he will become a great leader of Britain. However, he was awoken to have a new start in his life when he found that military career was very exciting and suit him the most upon enrollment to the Royal Military College (now academy) at Sandhurst.[2]

MILITARY CAREER

As a military commander.

5. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the 4th Queen Own Hussar Regiment on 20 Feb 1895. His pay as a second lieutenant in the regiment was £ 300 and was not sufficient for him to maintain his life style and to be at the equivalent to other officers in the regiment. This was the reason why he took an interest in war correspondence[3]. He did not intend to follow a conventional career path of promotion through army ranks, but to seek out at all possible chances of military action and used his mother's and family influence in high society to arrange postings and active campaigns[4]. Therefore, he was involved in several wars as a soldier as well as a reporter. His writings and career brought him to the attention of the public. He then earned himself a significant additional income as he intended before. He also acted as a war correspondent for several London newspapers and wrote his own books about the campaigns.

a. In 1895, he travelled to Cuba to observe and cover Cuban war for independent from Spain.

b. From 1896 to 1897, he was served in Bombay, India as a Calvary Officer and commanded second Calvary Brigade operating in Malakand (Pakistan).

c. In early 1898, he was transferred to Egypt and involved directly in the battle of Omdurman in Sudan.

6. Winston Churchill resigned from military service in 1899. Then, he was assigned as a journalist to cover the Boer War for the London Morning Post. His adventure was very capturing and his courageous escape has made him popular and therefore, he was considered as a hero on his return to England in 1900[5].

INVOLVEMENT IN POLITIC

As a politician.

7. In 1900, Winston Churchill was first elected to take the seat for Oldham as a Member of Parliament (MP) in the House of Commons. Then, he was chosen as MP of Manchester Northwest (1906-1908), Dundee and Woodford (1924-1964). Between the years of 1906 to 1911, he had served various governmental posts such as In charge of Board and Trade, Home Office, Lord of Admiralty, Munitions, War and Air Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Although he had a very challenging time as a politician, he is still remembered for his contributions as a successful Prime Minister during WW2[6].

8. On May 10th 1940, the time when the Germans were attacking Western Europe, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain resigned. King George VI had asked Churchill to become a Prime Minister and form a government at that critical time. Churchill formed a coalition with the Labour, Liberal and

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Conservative parties. He developed the 'Grand Alliance' concept with the Russia and America. He became a symbol of victory among the oppressed and dominated peoples. In 1945, the Labour party defeated the Conservatives in the election and Churchill was no longer a Prime Minister. However, he was effortlessly reelected to his seat and became Leader of the Opposition. When the WW2 was over, Churchill lobbied for peace. At Fulton, Missouri in 1946, Churchill warned of the 'Iron Curtain' in Europe and urged Anglo-American preparedness[7]. In 1951, the Conservatives won again and Churchill returned as Prime Minister. Worried over the possibility of nuclear war, he urged a meeting at the summit with the new leaders of Russia while maintaining peace through strength. Ironically, the first post war summit conference was held a few months after he retired as Prime Minister in April 1955.

ACHIEVEMENT AND FAILURE

9. His greatest achievement was in his political career as statesman, historian, and biographer. His involvement in World War 1 (WW1) and WW2 and as the Prime Minister of England had put him a central place in modern British history and widely considered as the greatest political figure in the 20th century. The achievements of Winston Churchill are more in politic and journalist career rather than in the military.

a. At the Board of Trade, Churchill continues a program of social reform begun by his predecessor, Lloyd George, introducing an eight-hour working day for miners, setting up boards to fix minimum wages, and establishing state-run labor exchanges.

b. In October 1911, Churchill was appointed as Lord of the Admiralty, where he oversees an ambitious program to prepare the fleet for a brewing war with Germany[8].

c. Churchill successfully pushed a plan to seize Istanbul in 1915, the capital of Germany's ally Turkey, and open a route to Russia by forcing a fleet through the Dardanelles Strait, the entry to the Sea of Marmara and a gateway to Istanbul, which lies on the sea's northeastern shore.

d. When he was appointed as Minister of Munitions in Lloyd George's coalition government, he has successfully pushed for the development of the tank and its deployment on the Western Front.

e. He has initially succeeded the securing an intensification of the British action against the new Bolshevik government in Russia during his appointment as

State Secretary of War and Air.

f. While in his Colonial Secretary Post he produced a white paper confirming Palestine as a Jewish national home while recognizing continuing Arab rights. He was also involved in the negotiations that lead to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

g. He was appointed to the secret Committee on Air Defense Research in 1935, from where he assisted the build-up of the Royal Air Force (RAF), a development which was very crucial to the outcome of the Battle of Britain in four years time.

h. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1953.

i. As an author, he had written about 43 books, 800 articles and speeches (18 volumes had been published)[9]. He said that; ' It was great fun writing a book. One lived with it. It became a companion.'

10. During WW1, as the First Lord of the Admiralty, he was blamed for a failure of attempted to seize the Dardanelles and Gallipoli Peninsula, which guarded the connection

between the Mediterranean and Black Seas[10]. He resigned and took the blame and pointed up his regrets on the failure. In his speech, he said, ' never to undertake a key

operation of war without full authority to carry it out'[11].

ANALYSIS OF HIS LEADERSHIP TRAITS

11. The analysis of Winston Churchill leadership traits is based on the characteristic and qualities of the leaders as defined by the Malaysian Army Leadership Doctrine (Provisional) 2004. For the purpose of this study only several traits of his leadership will be used as follows:

Forward Looking. Before the outbreak of WWI, Churchill saw that war was imminent. His experience as correspondence and politician taught him to analyze situation and predict the possible eventualities in future. When he saw the growing tension between Britain, Russia, Italy and other states added with the build-up of German Navy, he knew that war was inevitable. He immediately ordered for a demonstration on the pretext of training of his naval fleet. The force was then ordered to remain in the exercise area and on

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standby. His foresight became reality when Austria declared war on Serbia. The fleet was then ordered immediately to Northern Scotland to join in the containment of German Fleet. The incident with France when German started Blitzkrieg was also an indication of forward looking that will be covered in tandem with courage.

Knowledge. Churchill was 65 years old when he first became the Prime Minister of Britain. Despite his age and enormous energy, he had been a member of parliament (MP) for nearly 40 years. He had held senior posts, both at home and in international affairs for over 25 of those years. During this extensive career he had experienced failure and unpopularity. Indeed during the early days of his leadership he was still considerable distrust from members of his own Conservative party. Through all this he maintained his self belief :

‘ Success is the result of good judgments, that good judgment is the result of experience and that experience is often the result of bad judgment[12]’

There is no doubt that the extensive knowledge and experience that Churchill had gain was the central to his leadership style. This experience helped to found his vision and the lessons he learnt helped him to be decisive and make the right decisions.

c. Charisma. Leadership itself is either necessarily good or desirable. Of course many leaders have been described as charismatic and many were not. Churchill had a powerful personality and wonderful communication skills. It has been said that after meeting Churchill you believed you could

achieve anything but after meeting Hitler you believed that he could achieve anything.

d. Courage. It includes both physical and moral courage. Physical courage emphasizes on self control and confidence, while moral courage is more concerned with the ability to take unpopular and difficult decision often in the face of contrary advice and adversity[13]. His life from age 22 to 26 was spent first as a member of the Cavalry and later as an officer in the Infantry. He fought in several wars throughout the period, most notably in India, Sudan and South Africa, emerging unscathed despite his constant participation in heavy fighting on the front line. As a correspondent for the Morning Post, Churchill covered the Boer War in South Africa. In 1899, on his way to the front line in Cape Town, he wrote to his mother: ' I shall believe I am to be preserved for future things[14].' whether by sheer luck or divine providence, Churchill emerged from many battles unharmed. These experiences gave Churchill a sense of invincibility that emboldened him and gave him great courage in his career.

e. Initiative. To take action whenever needed in the absences or direction from a superior. Always plan ahead and continuously try to do thing in a better way[15]. Churchill was sent to boarding schools throughout his youth, where he learned to get along without his parents, who rarely visited him. This fact alone is enough to explain his independency and initiative.

f. Ability to Communicate. Winston Churchill was a master communicator. It perhaps goes without saying that the leadership trait of communication is an essential aspect of almost every task. Leadership is about working

productively through and with others and this cannot be achieved without the ability to communicate. Churchill worked hard at writing his key note speeches for the nation or House of Commons. Though not a natural orator he was a perfectionist and would write and rehearse and rework his speech. More than any other trait, Churchill's superb writing and speaking skills allowed him to lead Britain and its Commonwealth to victory. His earnest entreaties inspired millions of Britons to search their souls, to accept their responsibilities, to do their duty in the struggle against tyranny[16].

g. A Historian. Winston Churchill was always acutely aware of the broader historical context of events. He often made conscious use of history, specifically his own experiences in WWI, to analyze and make decisions during WW2. But he used history for more than just tactical analysis. His astute grasp of the broad technological trends of the last 300 years, and of the crucial importance of their applications in warfare, led to his invention of the tank during the First World War.

h. Futuristic. Winston Churchill was an 'always ahead' thinking man who promoted technological developments for the military. During World War I, Churchill promoted the development of the tank[17]. Later Winston Churchill also promoted the development and use of radar and the breaking of the German codes from the Enigma machine[18].

i. Drive To Take Action. Leadership is ultimately about getting things done that and get results and improve performance. It's the ability to influence, motivate and provide the tools and environment to others so that they can best contribute towards the successful attainment of the goals of their

community or organization. Winston Churchill was a man 12 of immense Courage and Creativity. Combined with this ability and all his other traits have shaped the war during Britain's darkest hour.

CONCLUSION

21. A good leader is made, not born. Winston Churchill's traits made him an extraordinarily effective leader of millions of soldiers and civilians. While it is easy for us in the calm clarity of perception to discern historical influences on his character and behavior. Predicting a person's behavior using present-day knowledge is not so easy. In the summer of 1884, the headmaster of Ascot Preparatory School for boys in England commented on the report card of Winston Spencer Churchill:

Conduct has been exceedingly bad; he is not to be trusted to do a single thing. In what may be the most egregious misjudgment of character ever made, the headmaster concluded, he has no ambition[19].

22. It proves that leadership traits are not heritage from the parent to their sons. It only matters of how they were raised and influenced by their parent, surrounding environments and the most import is the education. By applying this finding in the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) system, we can say that training play the important roles in the making of future commanders. It should start at the beginning with right syllabus and should be progress along the career stage of the officers.

RECOMMENDATION

23. Studying and analyzing great leaders is one the means to encourage our officers towards enhancing their leadership skill. Necessary exposure must

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be given to as many officers at all level to occasionally shoulder higher responsibilities, so as to provide and prepare them to be a leader. The basic ingredients of the leadership skills should be taught in the theory and practically in our military institution as early as possible.

24. Military Leadership Doctrine should be made available to all the services in MAF. Leadership Centre needs is another option that can be look into the future of MAF plan to produce a good leader in the future.