

Leadership is more important than ever

Leadership has always been a key factor in the success of humans. Different states and organizations over the years have succeeded with a combination of management and leadership. Management is more of a science and was radically improved by the advent of the scientific method and the industrial revolution. Leadership, on the other hand, has always existed. There has always been someone in every successful group who has stepped forward to lead. Although management is clearly a science, leadership is a combination of art and science. The “Leaders can be made” school leans towards science, while the “Leaders are born” side leans towards art. Certainly discussions about leadership have become richer with the advent of science, particularly behavioral science. As the science and art of leadership have evolved the need for leadership has increased in prominence.

There are three major reasons that leadership is more important than ever in the United States today:

- Demographics
- Great Power Competition
- Ideology - as a subset of Great Power Competition.

The United States is undergoing a demographic shift and is more litigious and technocratic. While these are not new trends, they are sharpening with the expansion of both technology companies and law schools. While both are key to national success, both communities tightly focus on technical competence; neither community is particularly famous for focusing on leadership. While technicians are fine managers for technology companies, several have had trouble transitioning to leaders in large companies. This trouble is evident when examining the success of startup companies.

[The majority of startups fail](#): 50 percent after five years and 70 percent after 10 years. Data found that 46 percent of all companies in the U.S. fail due to “incompetence” while 23% of startups specifically fail by not having the right team. Both sound like leadership failure. Leadership demographic disparity is also reflected in our Congress. Their legislation draws the boundaries we all operate within. One proxy for the number of leaders in Congress is military service. There are currently [91 veterans in Congress](#), the lowest total since at least World War II and down from 75% of Congressional veterans in 1973, even lower than the [96 veterans in the 116th Congress](#) while there are [230 lawyers between the two houses](#). Technology companies and Congress are only two areas that need more leaders; veterans should be seeking to integrate into these areas and others. Leadership at home should be complimented by a reinvigorated effort to lead within the global system - an effort increasing challenged by reemerging Great Power Competition.

The current iteration of Great Power Competition has its’ roots in the wake of the Cold War when the US enjoyed a unipolar moment. China began their economic expansion and recovery from the Century of Humiliation during the rule of Deng Xiaoping between 1978-1989. [Deng Xiaoping Thought](#) led to Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics, where the Chinese Communist Party monopolized political power while allowing the Chinese people to adopt a more capitalist outlook and enrich themselves. The Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s and began to

recover when Vladimir Putin took over in 2000. Putin manifested dislike for the US-led global system and told everyone that he would no longer support the world order at the [Munich Security Conference](#) in 2007. Their friends North Korea and Iran have faced off against the rest of the world since 1949 and 1979, respectively. They are joined by lesser lights such as Cuba and Venezuela. These states learned during the First Gulf War that direct, kinetic confrontation against the US, allies and partners was a good way to get hurt, so they began analytic efforts to figure out how to frustrate the U.S.-led coalition and achieve their own political goals. This resulted in approaches such as [Unrestricted Warfare](#), the [Three Warfares](#), [hybrid warfare](#), [gray zone operations](#), and [New Generation Warfare](#). What these approaches all have in common is they confront the U.S.-led coalition via information, cyber, criminal, and economic ways while avoiding methods violent enough to incur a military response. One of the reasons that the U.S. has failed to counter these methods is due to a lack of leadership in both the Executive and Legislative branches.

As one part of both demographics in the U.S. and GPC, ideology is increasingly an issue. Both Russia and China (and to a lesser extent their partners Iran and North Korea) pursue actions to de-legitimize democracy and capitalism, in particular the US version of both. Russia seeks to counter a global system that they believe is organized to keep them down. China seeks to replace the US as the global hegemon. Iran and North Korea seek regime survival. All four realize that a free, democratic world that respects a wide variety of human rights is an existential threat for them. Unfortunately, many in the developed world have forgotten why these regimes and their communist and authoritarian practices are a threat. Some have never read the history, others believe these regimes do not represent a pure version of their political structure and therefore are not a threat, while others believe these systems are superior to the systems utilized in the developed world. Within the United States, more and more people do not remember when capitalism and freedom were our *raison d'être*, others are not familiar with the rules of U.S. politics, and others seek to subordinate the political system to their rule. These practices do not represent what is best in our country and only serve to divide us further. Domestic and international leadership can mitigate all these issues.

Confronting these three major problem areas requires the vision to identify the problem, the ability to put together a team to conceptualize a solution, the moral courage to call out the perpetrators, and the political will to effectuate a solution. Our managers have not yet manifested these leadership capabilities. Only when leaders, regardless of their political ideology, move out to the forefront and provide guidance and leadership will we be able to unit and move forward into the future.