Leading United Nations Peace Operations[1]

Throughout the UN High-level Independent Panel's consultations, all partners and stakeholders identified the quality of leadership as one of the most crucial factors in the success of UN peace operations. The best United Nations leaders are remembered for their courage, vision, humility and ability to inspire others.[2]

It is often said that even when a mandate for a United Nations (UN) peace operation is clear and well prioritized by a unified Security Council, and even when the needed resources and capabilities match the environment and the Host Nation is committed to the peace process, unless there is good leadership the mission is unlikely to succeed. This statement puts an emphasis on leadership and places good leadership where it should belong, at the forefront of mission requirements. It is therefore important to try to analyse what is good mission leadership and try to see what, if anything, is different about it from the leadership of any other activity or organization.

It was observed by a recent Under-Secretary-General involved in peace operations[3] that the UN tends to throw its leaders into the deep end of the pool without really knowing whether they can swim or not. This both recognizes the complexities of leading contemporary missions and the risks inherent in the selection and deployment of leaders from Member States without thorough preparation and leadership development. To meet its objectives of fairness, universality and legitimacy, the UN must recruit its leaders (political, developmental and security) from the spectrum of its contributing Member States. Some leaders are a known quantity and have

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[1] This Policy Brief was developed from the series of lectures that the author gives on the subject of UN Leadership for the UN's Senior Mission Leadership Course. It was first committed to print on behalf of the Hiroshima Peacekeeping Centre, a Challenges Forum Partner, in February 2016.
[2] United Nations, *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people*, A/70/95-S/2015/466, 17 June 2015, para 268.
[3] Stated under the Chatham House Rule to a recent UN Senior Leadership Programme (SLP).

Background details

This policy brief was originally written as a background paper for the Challenges Forum Workshop on *Taking Leadership to the Next Level: UN Peace Operations 2020*, co-hosted by Challenges Forum Partners the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, in partnership with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the Center for Creative Leadership in Carlisle 28 February - 1 March 2017. The policy brief takes into account deliberations and results of the meeting.

The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Challenges Forum Partnership, Secretariat or hosts of the Challenges Forum meeting.

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learned their trade on earlier missions. But many are new to the UN and while being recommended as leaders by their own Member States, have not necessarily conceptualized or experienced the step change in complexity between leading in a national context and leading within UN peace operations. This recognizes that there is indeed something extra needed to be a good UN leader.

Against this background, this Policy Brief tries to isolate what is meant by good leadership and the nature of its different characteristics, styles and competencies and then apply these to the UN context. Its premise is that leading is a process of influence and can be learned despite an individual's personal temperament. However, leading in the context of a UN peace operation, because of its complexity, requires refined skill sets. The demanding context and the competencies of leading UN peace operations are discussed with observations on what good leadership should look like in the mission environment and how it can be achieved. The paper ends with a set of findings about UN leadership coupled with associated questions for consideration and discussion.

An early note of caution is needed here with regards to the use and meaning of the term leadership. In the English language the word leadership is often used interchangeably, and sometimes confusingly, to mean either the cadre of leaders (as in 'the UN's senior mission leadership') or as an effective practice we expect from good leaders (as in 'she showed good leadership as a Head of Mission'). Which is meant is usually left to context. This Policy Brief primarily focuses on the second meaning but will also rely on the context to make clear which meaning is being applied.

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1. What is Good Leadership in UN Peace Operations?

Good Leadership Characteristics

It is of course axiomatic that thoughts on good leadership are as old as mankind and accordingly there has been much philosophy from Confucius to the present day on its tenets. For example, it is striking what Aristotle had to say in the 4th Century BCE to his student Alexander the Great of Macedon.[4] Alexander had set off to conquer the known Eastern world with a multi-national army. Aristotle said to him: 'if you are to appeal to your followers (influence them) you need to use three things: *pathos*, *ethos* and *logos*.' In many Western languages these Greek words form the basis of words respectively meaning in English empathy, ethics (integrity) and logic/knowledge/competence. Aristotle went on to say that without them you must rely on 'contracts or torture'. We have all probably known leaders who only get people to do what they want because they have power, contractual or disciplinary, over their subordinates. But Aristotle's point was that you cannot conquer the known world by managing your subordinates

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[4] This citation was kindly brought to the attention of the author by Professor John Antonakis of Lausanne Univerity in his capacity as guest lecturer at the Geneva Center for Security Policy's Leadership for Peacebuilding Programme.

in this way. The corollary to leadership is 'followship'. As true 'followship' is voluntary, contracted subordinates will rarely follow a leader when the going gets tough. So the need to use pathos, ethos and logos remains as tellingly relevant and helpful today as it did 2400 years ago.

In the 21st Century, if we search the word leadership in any Internet search engine, we will get thousands of hits. This recognizes the importance of the practice of good leadership in the functioning and running of any organization. As a first step to understand the nature of good leadership, it is helpful to think of impressive leaders in our own lives whom we have admired and for whom it was a privilege to work. What characteristics about them make them such good leaders or role models for us? Whilst different people and cultures will admire different attributes in a leader there is a core set of characteristics that can be seen to stand out as those of good leadership. In any multi-cultural, multi-national group of people (which well describes the UN), when invited to identify these characteristics they normally will include:

- providing vision or direction;

- having good judgement;

- being an empathetic and good listener;

- being an inclusive team builder;

- showing humility;

- having good delegation, decision-making and communication skills; and

- above all, showing integrity.[5]

This list is not exhaustive but it would be fair to conclude that a person who combines all or most of these characteristics is getting close to being the kind of leader whom most of us can admire and follow, as exemplars of good leadership.

But if this helps us to understand what makes good leadership, it is necessary to dwell for a moment on what leadership actually is. Again, there are many different views, but most thinking on this subject believes it can be summarized as something like this:

> *the art of influencing others to achieve the leader's desired outcomes.*

Leadership in this sense is an art because it depends upon human creative skill and because it is about the interface between humans. It is organic. It involves getting others, as an individual or a group, to achieve a certain goal

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[5] Evidence gathered by the author from questionnaires during all UN SML Programmes since 2008 and also the UN SMART programme since 2010.

or goals. But it is immediately worth noting that not all good leaders are good people. There are many examples throughout history where people have been malignly influenced by effective leaders to serve evil or bad outcomes. So when we talk about good leadership we must always talk about leadership with integrity; the 'desired outcomes' must be for some common good of men and women. We should also note that being in a position of leadership does not automatically make a person a leader. Sadly, there are many examples of people, including in UN peace operations, who are in positions of leadership but who show few of the characteristics of good leadership. This tells us that leadership is a process of influence between leaders and followers; it is not about a position. Indeed, it can be said that leadership is about a perception created in the minds of those who witness it. Leading is about influencing people to carry out tasks willingly to a certain end. Returning to Aristotle and the notion of 'followship', this does not come automatically, it has to be earned. Because it is voluntary, leaders have to earn the respect and acceptance of their intended followers. To do this, leaders have to show the characteristics that we as individuals and followers can admire.

If leadership is an art, then individuals can control and adapt this art. It is often stated that leaders are born and not made. But while some people may find the characteristics of leadership easier to display than others, it does not mean that good leadership skills cannot be learned. This is based on the premise that personalities are given whereas behaviour can be adapted. This is an important concept, for it gives everyone a chance of self-development. It also however, assumes that most mid-rank professionals know their own personality, will have had their personality and characteristics evaluated and will have been mentored on how their personality comes across to others.[6] Everybody is different. While some seem to assume the mantle of leadership naturally, others have to work at it. But for any leader to succeed, 'followship' has to be generated and sustained. It is therefore useful to know what people look for in their leaders, and then try to adapt behaviour to meet these requirements, while remaining true to oneself. Here we can note what gender mainstreaming tells us about how different people are affected differently by a leader's decisions and actions and therefore how leaders have to ensure that the concerns and experiences of all intended followers, men and women, have to be taken into consideration.[7] This does not mean that good leadership is artificial or contrived; all leaders have their private face. But we need to understand that leaders are on a form of stage, and so a public face or 'persona' needs to be developed. People look at or up to those who lead; and if their attention and influence is to be gained then the leader must, like any good actor, learn to rise to the occasion, gather his/her thoughts (and breath) and then communicate. Hence self-awareness is an important characteristic of good leadership.

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[6] For more information see for example the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality inventory, www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/ (accessed 20 January 2017) and the Big Five personality traits also knows as the Five Factor Model (FFM), Lewis. R. Goldberg, 'The Structure of phenotypic personality traits', *American Psychologist*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January 1993), pp. 26-34

[7] Dr Louise Olsson, 'Leading the Way to a More Equal Peace: Senior Management and Gender Mainstreaming', Challenges Forum Policy Brief 2016:4.

Leadership Types and Styles

Turning to leadership types, it is helpful here to introduce some modern leadership theories, which, by adapting the simple words of Aristotle, now describe leadership as being *transactional*, *instrumental* and *transformational*. Transactional leadership is the use of hard power, when the leader has authority derived from the structure of the organization and the leader's position within it. When this leadership is exerted it tends to be telling followers *what* to do. In this sense, Heads of Mission and Mission Heads of Component clearly have transactional leadership authority. Instrumental leadership, however, is about professionalism and knowledge. It comes from knowing the business and its detail; from being an expert in a subject compared to others. Instrumental leaders know how to do things. They can manage. In a UN peace operation the obvious example is the Director of Mission Support or the Mission Chief of Staff. Finally, transformational leadership is about the use of soft power and charisma to create and inspire the vision. Transformational leaders use influence rather than authority and tend to focus on the *why* of thinking and planning.[8] These adjectival terms are useful in helping describe and explain the different *styles* evident in the deployment of leadership within UN peace operations and in the analysis of good leadership below.

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Authoritative Leadership. This style is common amongst certain cultures and hierarchical organizations characterised by structured social norms and (often uniformed) rank. It is a style needed for crises, when time is of the essence, and often the very safety of the team or group is under threat. The leader has the authority and is expected to make the fast decision and the team/subordinates are expected to obey it. It is therefore a transactional style of leadership. There is little time for discussion or persuasion, just obedience and action, and often therefore it is welcome in time of crisis. But overuse brings its drawbacks. For a start, only one brain is assessing the situation. It may be (and hopefully is) a good and trained brain but there may be better options, which that brain has not grasped but which others have. If therefore this style is used to the exclusion of others, there is a danger of the wrong decision being made, and worse, in time if persisted in as a style, it leads to the disempowerment and disengagement of the subordinates or team. When an authoritative style starts to become autocratic, it begins to lose its 'followship'.

Mission or Directive Leadership. This style is often regarded as the best style of leadership. It involves the leader stating his/her intent and desired outcome and then letting the followers find their way to that outcome. Mission or directive leadership says *what* is to be achieved and *why*, not *how*. It therefore tends to be transformational.

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[8] For more on this see for example John Antonakis and Robert J House, 'Instrumental Leadership: Measurement and Extension of Transformational-Transactional Leadership Theory', *The Leadership Quarterly*, Volume 25, Issue 4 (August 2014), pp. 746-771.

It is efficient in that it allows the leader to concentrate on other things once direction is given, while empowering followers to take ownership and grow and develop in their roles. By focusing on the vision and the product, not the process, micro-management is avoided. It can involve periodic reviews and controls but it carries risk. This leadership style requires excellent understanding and communication between the leader and the followers who have to be in each other's mind and trusted. This requires mutual confidence and preferably the leaders have to engage in some sort of training and mentoring of the followers.[9] All these requirements are seldom met in ad hoc UN missions characterised by multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-disciplinary structures. And so while recognized as a desirable style of leadership, it takes time and much joint experience before a directive style of leadership can be safely adopted within the turbulent environment of UN peace operations.

Participative or Collaborative Leadership. The tendency within the UN is therefore to default to participative or collaborative leadership, which involves group discussion before decision. It harnesses the abilities and brains of the team, without removing the responsibility of the leader to decide and be accountable. Teams feel consulted and therefore empowered. But it can take time, especially when the teams are not good or practiced in sharing their views positively and succinctly. The leader therefore needs to show patience and be good at listening, while remaining faithful to the needed time line. It can be used in emergencies and crises to get wider views but at some time in this situation the leader will have to be decisive.

It should be stressed that none of the styles examined above take away the responsibility of the leader to be accountable for the decisions made. This points to another truth about leadership, which is its relationship to decision-making. It is hard to be a good leader if you are unprepared to make decisions and then be accountable for them.

Good Leadership in Practice

Good leadership tends to mix these styles depending on the situation and by knowing when to consult, to delegate, to listen and to be decisive. Depending on personality and arguably gender,[10] some styles are easier to adopt than others. Naturally authoritative persons need to know how and when to consult, to listen and to show empathy. Conversely, natural consensus seekers need to know how and when to make fast decisions and to take personal risk. Understanding these styles helps adapt behaviour to improve leadership. Nevertheless, different personality types thrive in different situations. Ideally, leaders are chosen for their personality type

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[9] A caveat is necessary here regarding the *selection* and training by leaders of their followers, lest leaders select their subordinates solely in their own image thereby losing the necessary diversity of views and approaches.
[10] Alice Eagly and Linda Carli, 'Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership', *Harvard Business Review*, September 2007.

to match the demands of the environment and the needs of the leadership team. In the case of UN peace operations, at the start-up of a mission, it is helpful to have leaders who can thrive in chaos and uncertainty, and who can make fast decisions. Conversely, in times of transition to the Host Nation when diplomatic and State-building skills are needed, it is good to have leaders who are naturally collaborative and consensual and whose focus is 'leadership for sustaining peace'.[11] In whichever environment, strong teams tend to contain complementary personalities.

Inevitably given the authority and responsibility of senior leaders within a UN peace operation, many of the relationships within the mission will be transactional. But such leadership will only work where there is clear authority. Many of the key players within the context of a peace operation (such as the UN Country Team, other International Organisations and the Donors) are outside such authority and so the leadership of them has to be through a mix of transformational and instrumental techniques. It is worth noting here that transformational leadership on its own without a solid backing of instrumental leadership can be *mis*leading; or an empty shell. In Aristotelian terms, there must be logos as well as pathos, lest people are led in the wrong direction. Nevertheless, experience has shown that good inspirational leaders tend to be transformational in style and usually start at the *why* of thinking, planning and direction. This recognizes that if a leader can create a shared vision for the future amongst the followers, this will directly affect their behaviour in the *present*. This is a powerful concept. It is for this reason that so often when the characteristics of good leaders are subjectively listed, terms such as 'the ability to create a vision' are usually included; it is that transformational ability to make sense of confusion and complexity and to chart a path in which followers have faith.

For many years the word and the concept of leadership was unconsciously avoided in the UN and instead, everything was termed as good management. It was as if the term leadership made the UN uncomfortable with its overtones of militarism. The private sector never had such inhibitions and much leadership theory and discussion now emanates from there. But good management is probably just another way of expressing instrumental leadership. Clearly, there is a place for good management but the recognition is now that this alone is not enough. There has to be vision as well. There are many ways to express this to illustrate the differences. I like the couplets below from the UN DPKO/DFS' SMART programme for senior mission support staff. Although seeming a little hard on good managers, they illustrate well the difference between transformational and instrumental leadership and the direction in which the UN now thinks it should be going.

The leader innovates; the manager administers.
The leader develops; the manager maintains.
The leader focuses on people and behaviour; the manager focuses on

...if a leader can create a shared vision for the future amongst the followers, this will directly affect their behaviour in the present.

[11] A term used by Prof Youssef Mahmoud, former UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General and member of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and currently, inter alia, lecturer and mentor on leadership at Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

systems, processes and structures.

The leader inspire trust; the manager relies on control.

The leader has a long-range perspective; the manager has a short-range view.

The leader asks why and what; the manager asks how and when.

The leader's eye is on the horizon; the manager's is on the bottom line.

The leader challenges the status quo; the manager accepts it.

The leader does the right thing; the manager does things right.[12]

2. The Leadership Environment for UN Peace Operations

Direct and Indirect Leadership

Leadership styles are discussed above but the *function* of leadership can be split into Direct and Indirect Leadership. It is helpful to understand the difference as individuals gain more seniority and responsibility and their leadership challenges become more complex. Direct Leadership, which might be called 'heroic' leadership, is essentially charismatic. It is that quality of personal magnetism and commitment, which makes people follow the leader. It is the leadership that creates myths, songs and legends of old and creates team spirit. It can be characterised as 'follow me'. Direct leadership is motivating and inspiring and it is applicable when leading small groups or teams. To work, this leadership has to be face to face, the charisma has to be felt and touched. The leader/follower relationship is direct, hence the name. There is little need for complex coordination. It is therefore a requirement of junior leadership, but its core and techniques, while learned at a junior level, are applicable at middle and senior ranks as well.

However, there is a natural limit to when Direct Leadership alone can be applied. When organizations and structures become bigger and more complex, when the leader simply cannot 'touch' everyone of his/her followers, there is an increasing requirement for Indirect Leadership. This is sometimes called Organizational Leadership. As the name implies it is the leadership needed for large organizations. It is about creating and managing coordinating structures and communication mechanisms, to achieve influence and to cascade the leaders' intent down throughout the system.[13] Typically, it is displayed by leaders of large private sector corporations, or public sector organisations such as government departments, police forces or large military units. Indirect Leadership requires leadership teams, who need to be trained and to be in the mind of the leader. It therefore does still require Direct Leadership at the top level to influence the team. So, even in Indirect Leadership, there remains a need for the good leader to be transformational (charismatic) in style. Because, if the leader cannot

...if the leader cannot communicate the vision, the leadership team will not share it, and it is unlikely that anyone else below in the organization will either.

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[12] Based on Warren Bennis list of 12 differences between leaders and managers. Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader: the Leadership Classic,* revised and updated 20th anniversary edition (Basic Books, New York, 2009), p. 42.
[13] It is worth noting that the increasing use of social media by senior political leaders begins to blur the distinction between Direct and Indirect Leadership in that they are communicating directly and immediately to a mass followership.

communicate the vision, the leadership team will not share it, and it is unlikely that anyone else below in the organisation will either.[14]

The senior leadership of a large UN mission fits exactly into the category of an organisation that needs Indirect Leadership skills coupled with Direct Leadership expertise. Put simply, a Head of Mission and his/her mission leadership team, have to have the skill set to lead, manage and influence a + $1billion mission with up to 20,000 staff in an exceptionally demanding environment. At the same time though, the senior leader in the field will need to use Direct Leadership when dealing and interacting personally with the many components in the mission area as well as with the elements of the leadership team.

Environmental Complexity

To grasp the function of a UN mission leader, the unique nature of the challenges involved in the UN mission environment have to be understood. The pressure and demands on UN peace operations are unrelenting as it continues to be the Security Council's chosen instrument for dealing with conflict and the breakdown of international peace and security. Mission mandates have become increasingly complex with a wide range of tasks requiring difficult prioritisation of resources and time. International expectations and standards are high and driving cultural change, such as improved governance, human rights and gender mainstreaming[15] bring a demanding set of leadership obligations and challenges. At the same time, the impact of the global financial crisis, has put a resource pressure on peace operations in which the UN is required to do more with less. Efficiency, cost effectiveness and rigor in driving down costs have all become central requirements for successful mission leadership. This is often unfamiliar territory for many of those leading UN peace operations.

Moreover, the consensus for peacekeeping looks uncertain. At the level of grand strategy, the partnership between the finance and troop contributing countries remains fragile despite the recent stronger focus on quality rather than quantity. In this atmosphere, initiatives to drive a more robust and capable peace operations posture are constrained. Political divisions within the Security Council over Syria and Libya have compounded these difficulties. Meanwhile, at the operational level, it is evident in a number of missions that the Host Nation's consent for the presence of the peacekeepers is eroding. Mission leadership has to deal with this issue and the required transition to something other than peacekeeping. But there is little appetite amongst donors to write blank cheques for development without measurable progress in governance, human rights, gender mainstreaming and the rule of law. Hence, difficult decisions have to be made at the operational level in

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[14] Robert Gordon and Peter Loge, *Strategic Communication: A Political and Operational Requisite for Successful Peace Operations,* Challenges Forum Occasional Paper 7: 2015; and 'Strategic Communications for the New Era of Peace Operations', Challenges Forum Policy Brief 2015:1.
[15] See for example the *United Nations, Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people,* A/70/95-S/2015/466, 17 June 2015; UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325,* 2015; and United Nations Development Group, *Human Rights up Front: An Overview,* https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Overview-of-Human-Rights-up-Front-2015-07-24.pdf (accessed 20 January 2017).

an area where the UN lacks expertise and capacity.

Most taxingly, and in addition to these significant demands on the mission's leadership team, it is arguable that the very paradigm of conflict is changing and that the UN's peace and security apparatus has yet to catch up. Just as the nature of conflict, which involved the UN, changed in the 1990s from inter-state to intra-state conflict, (requiring a major conceptual and operational re-think leading to multidimensional peacekeeping) there is evidence that it is changing again. Much of present day conflict, in areas where international peace operations are deployed, is driven by criminal and extremist activity. From Afghanistan to Somalia, through Syria, Yemen, Libya, the Sahel, Darfur and South Sudan, to parts of West Africa, and Haiti, the drivers of conflict and instability are most often asymmetrical threats such as transnational criminal and/or extremist violence. These threats thrive in an environment where there are weak institutions, poor governance and the absence of the rule of law.[16]

Peacekeepers today are not just caught up in the cross fire of conflict but actually sit in the cross hairs of those willing and able to target them.[17] The majority operates in an environment where there is little or no peace to keep and where the parties to the conflict are blurred. This puts peacekeepers in a situation where they are attacked for what they are and not just for *where* they are, or *for what* they do. The result is that approximately two thirds of UN personnel are now operating in contexts of significant levels of ongoing violence.[18] UN peacekeeping is struggling to manage this new paradigm of violence with conceptual and physical mechanisms still trying to make the change from traditional to multidimensional peacekeeping. The pressure and demands on the leadership of UN missions is therefore relentless and demanding. The environment is unusually complex, uncertain and it is influenced by a myriad of actors, internal and external. It is probably one of the most challenging environments for any organization to work within. Given that the UN mission is, by its very nature, ad hoc and temporary, it is this environment that represents the major reason why leadership in UN missions requires additional skill sets compared to leadership in a purely national context.

> *....it is this environment that represents the major reason why leadership in UN missions requires additional skill sets compared to leadership in a purely national context.*

3. Leadership Competencies in UN Peace Operations

Strategic Leadership

The concept of *strategic leadership* was developed by the US Army war college (USAWC). It is important to note that the term strategic is not used in the sense of levels of command and authority (as in 'the UN's strategic

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[16] See for example United Nations, *The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations*, Reports of the Secretary-General, A/70/357-S/2015/682, 2 September 2015.

[17] As briefed in 2015 to a UN Senior Mission Leader's Course by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operation's Office of Operations.

[18] See William R. Philips, 'The UN Reviews and What Should be Done to Improve the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated Personnel?', Challenges Forum Policy Brief 2016:3; and United Nations Peacekeeping, 'Peacekeeping Fact Sheet', http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml (accessed 20 January 2017).

level of command resides in New York'), but in the sense of meaning the highest and most demanding challenge of leadership. As such, it is very applicable to the leadership required in UN peace operations. The USAWC definition of strategic leadership is:

the process used by a senior leader to affect the achievement of a desired and clearly understood vision by influencing the organisational culture, allocating resources, directing through policy and directive and building consensus within a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment, which is marked by opportunities and threats.[19]

It can be seen that this definition very accurately describes UN missions' operating environment: one that is volatile, because there is conflict; uncertain because of the internal and external complexities with no clear direction or solution (if there were, the problem would have been solved earlier, without the UN); complex because of the intricate network of staff, functions and components within a multi-dimensional, multi-cultural and multi-national mission; and ambiguous because of the multiplicity of mandated tasks which are often in tension. This describes a typically difficult 'foggy' environment through which only good leadership can provide the necessary guidance and direction. Metaphors of leadership providing a compass or a light through this fog are often helpful.

The UN's Mission Leadership Team

Given the complexity of the demands upon leaders in UN missions, it has become best practice to help share the burden of leadership through the integrated operation of the mission leadership team (MLT). The composition of the MLT will vary according to the size and focus of the mission, but all new large missions (in South Sudan, Mali, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo etc.) always have a core component, chaired by the Head of Mission (or Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG)) which consists of the Deputy SRSG Political, the Deputy SRSG (Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator), the Force Commander, the Police Commissioner, the Director of Mission Support and the Mission Chief of Staff.[20] This team provides the 'cabinet government' of the mission, which works at the operational level and is responsible for implementing the mission's mandate through the coordinated planning and execution of the many tasks necessary to attain the strategic end state (the vision). The effectiveness of the mission is often directly related to the teamwork this group show in working together to provide the vision and direction to shape and represent the culture of the mission, as well as the individual leadership they show in the direction of their respective components.

[19] *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 3rd Edition, Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, United States Army War Colleges, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 2010.
[20] Given the increasing requirement for UN MLTs to be competent in tranformational leadership, their expertise is now commonly reinforced, inter alia, by key advisory personnel such as gender and strategic communication advisers.

Since the smooth and efficient functioning of the MLT is so fundamental to the success of a UN peace operation, it is perhaps surprising that more resources and time are not invested by the UN in the preparation and development of these leadership teams. There are reasons for this, to do with the political process and timing of the selection of senior leaders, as well as internal, mission-level inhibitions, which will be addressed in the Challenges Forum Policy Brief 2017:3. However, best practice in leadership development has shown that there is an inbuilt reluctance for senior leaders to engage in training. Training is considered to be for junior people. A sign of weakness, rather than of strength. It would therefore be beneficial if the UN stopped using the word training at this level and focused instead on leadership and leadership team development.

Personal Competencies for UN Mission Leadership

From this analysis, it is possible to determine the personal competencies that are needed to lead UN peace operations effectively. These competencies below apply not just to the senior leadership team, but to all those who make up their 'followship' and who also have a responsibility at their level to show personal leadership. Certainly, those in peace operations at their mid-career point are in this category.

- Be able to operate in a complex multi-cultural, multi-national environment. This requires inter- cultural competency and gender mainstreaming skills, which come from listening to understand, as well as the suspension of prejudicial judgement.

- Be a conceptual thinker, able to anticipate issues, plan ahead and manage change in a dynamic, uncertain environment. Those who like an ordered, predictable life will never be very comfortable in the UN.

- Have a good professional knowledge, the instrumental function of good leadership. This takes study, personal development, analysis and personal application (the logos of Aristotle).

- Have the ability to build and influence teams and to earn their trust through empathy, humility and charisma (the pathos of Aristotle).

- Be a good communicator. It is hard to show transformational leadership if the vision and the why cannot be expressed. For some, this does not happen naturally, but it can be learned. There are easily mastered oratorical techniques, such as the use of metaphor, of stories, of groups of three, of repetition, of contrast, of rhetorical questions etc. which can be practised and which can transform an individual's signalling and their ability to communicate convincingly.[21]

- Finally, show integrity, the ethos of Aristotle. People watch leaders. They are looking for leaders whom they can respect and trust. All too

....leadership is a process of influence and not a position of authority.

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[21] Geneva Centre for Security Policy's Leadership in Peacebuilding Course focuses closely on this self-development technique, facilitated by research undertaken by Prof John Antonakis of Lausanne University and Dr Daniel von Wittich.

often people who have responsibility for good leadership undermine their credibility by showing a lack of integrity in their behaviour.

Findings from UN Leadership Study and Questions for Discussion

In 2010, a UN senior leader, who was part of the UN Secretariat, Fabricio Hochschild-Drummond, undertook a study of leadership within the UN.[22] He conducted many interviews across the practitioners of UN peace operations, both in positions of senior leadership and followship. So in many respects it was a 360-degree assessment of UN leadership. This comprehensive report includes seven cogent findings that paraphrased here can serve as a useful basis for further discussion within the Challenges Forum work on *Taking Leadership to the Next Level: UN Peace Operations 2020.*

1. '*Individuals do not automatically become leaders by virtue of being appointed to senior positions.*' As discussed, leadership is a process of influence and not a position of authority. It has to be demonstrated, and 'followship', which is always voluntary, has to be earned. How can this be learnt? How can the UN better select, prepare and train leaders of UN peace operations to this end?

2. '*Leading a UN peace operation is about not being resigned to, but overcoming the restraints, and is also about creating the space for independent action.*' This speaks to good leaders being able to articulate a vision and give direction when all around looks difficult and confusing. It is about finding ways to overcome the many obstacles that will be in the way of any UN leader, both internally and externally. This can bring risk and therefore takes courage. What structural and institutional adjustments and reforms, if any, can the UN make to provide leaders of UN peace operations with the space for independent action without compromising standards and strategic authority?

3. '*Good UN leadership is about managing and growing beyond a series of contradictions.*' This speaks to the ambiguity in much of the environment of a peace operation, in which many issues and stake-holders are in tension. How to make progress while retaining impartiality and personal integrity is often a challenge. Are the existing doctrine, policies and guidelines sufficient and relevant for the environment of today's and future peace operations?

4. '*Good leadership in the UN is as much about courage and risk as it is about caution.*' This is saying that while there must be a balance, a fear of failure will most often lead to inaction. While recklessness is never advisable, excessive caution will result in mandate stalemate or failure. If easy solutions were readily available, the UN would never be needed. Most problems where the UN is deployed are intractable and will not respond readily to a cautious approach. This is especially true when the

....good leadership is unafraid of failure and learns from it.

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[22] Fabrizion Hochschild, *In and above Conflict: A Study on Leadership in the United Nations,* (Geneva, July 2010), pp. 108-109.

use of force by the UN is needed to protect civilians. Too often, through cautious and uncertain leadership nothing is done. There is a philosophy amongst good UN leaders that views the mandate not as a ceiling beyond which the mission or its components must not go (the cautious approach) but as a springboard for positive action, knowing what needs to be done to make progress. Again, this takes courage for there will be many who share success, but failure will always be lonely. Having said that, good leaders are unafraid of failure and learn from it. How can we better equip and empower leaders of UN peace operations to take appropriate and strategic risks? How can we better prepare them for and support them through local failure, without it undermining accountability?

5. '*Good UN leadership is about external and internal coalition-building.*' This speaks to transformational leadership, for it recognizes that a UN leader's transactional power and authority, the area of control, is limited. Instead, much of the work needed to succeed in a peace operation lies outside this area of control and with the host nation and the external partners, both within the mission area and elsewhere. This area of influence is widespread, and contains many stakeholders. Not all will be supportive. Achieving the needed support for the vision and the desired course of action requires skills of diplomacy, communication and inspiration. Are UN Mission leaders provided with the appropriate and relevant tools to build internal and external coalitions? Who are the relevant stakeholders, and how can UN mission leaders best build coalitions between them?

6. '*Successful UN leaders respect, care for and empower their staff.*' This is the modern articulation of 'pathos'. It is making a strong transformational leadership point, which focuses on the need to earn followship, and to build supporting teams. What creates and maintains followship and followers' loyalty to the mission mandate?

7. '*Good UN leadership is less about individuals than it is about creating strong leadership teams.*' This follows on from point above. So much poor leadership is ego driven. The mistaken focus is on the transactional trappings of power and authority. It is prevalent on UN missions in which the UN system often seems to reinforce the culture of the revered senior leader. The antidote to this is humility, which is in itself a key trait of good leadership. A quote by Harry S Truman is relevant here: 'It is amazing what you can achieve when you do not care who takes the credit'. This speaks to the need to take the 'I' out of leadership and instead invest the energy on building the team. Point six above shows how this must be done. How can cooperation and coordination between all components and actors of UN peace operation be improved? How can the formation, preparation and strengthening of senior leadership teams be reinforced? What team development activities are needed?

It is amazing what you can achieve when you do not care who takes the credit.

HARRY S TRUMAN

Conclusion

The list of what is needed for good leadership is always long and daunting. People new to the UN system often wonder whether they have the expertise or the personality to be good UN leaders. A useful technique is perhaps not just to think of good leaders whom you have admired, and therefore must try to emulate; but also to think of those people who were in positions of power and authority and who showed *poor or no* leadership. A way to get closer to understanding the essentials of good leadership is simply by determining to avoid their behaviour and their mistakes.

Furthermore, the seven Hochschild-Drummond findings are useful indicators to what is needed for leading in UN peace operations. It is the nature of the environment, the opaqueness of authority and responsibility, and the complexity of the multi-national, and multi-disciplinary structures, which make it different from leading in a purely national context. Leading in a UN peace operation is about operating in an extreme, ambiguous, dangerous and complex environment; the task at all levels is to provide vision and direction when all around is confusion, while being able to manage constant change (and crises) through good planning skills (starting at the why) by building integrated teams through the empowerment of staff and by communicating well and widely.

Leading in UN operations is not for everybody. It is time and energy sapping, lonely and often overwhelming. Armchair critics abound. It does demand a wide set of leadership skills including stamina, patience and a fair dose of good luck. Despite this, the rewards, in terms of being able to make a difference, are enormous, and there is always the richness and stimulation of working with brave, good, committed people from across the world's cultures who deserve good leaders. While making progress, the UN needs to invest more in the development and preparation of its leaders and its mission leadership teams; for unless Member States have confidence in the leadership of UN peace operations they will be reluctant to commit their resources and their people to support them. The objective of the Challenges Forum initiative on leading UN peace operations is to make a positive contribution to stronger and more effective mission leadership, fit-for-purpose for today's but also tomorrow's ever more complex challenges.

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The Challenges Forum is a strategic and dynamic platform for constructive dialogue among leading policymakers, practitioners and academics on key issues and developments in peace operations. The Forum contributes to shaping the debate by identifying critical challenges facing military, police and civilan peace operations, by promoting awareness of emerging issues and by generating recommendations for solutions for the consideration of the broader international peace operations community. It is a global network of Partners representing 49 peace operations departments and organizations from 22 countries. www.challengesforum.org