

In and above Conflict

A study on Leadership in the United Nations

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“Today’s United Nations is a multi-billion-dollar enterprise facing greater demands than ever in more places than ever. As in any organization, there is no substitute for first-rate leadership. Both at UN Headquarters and in the field, far-sighted, hard-driving, broad-minded UN officials can make all the difference in the world”

(Susan Rice, US Ambassador to the UN; 12 August 2009 speech at New York University: “A New Course in the World, a New Approach at the UN.”)

“The world needs leaders made strong by vision, sustained by ethics, and revealed by political courage... Whatever the dimensions of global governance, however renewed and enlarged its machinery, whatever values give it content, the quality of global governance depends ultimately on leadership”

(Commission on Global Governance, Our Global Neighbourhood, page 353, Oxford University Press 1995)

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Introduction: the purpose and scope of this study

The importance of leadership to the UN

The United Nations Secretariat, UN missions and UN organizations are critically dependent on the quality of leadership provided by senior UN officials. It affects how the UN is viewed, its credibility and the leverage the organization enjoys; it has a significant influence on staff motivation and performance; it determines in part the quality of staff attracted to and retained by the institution; it can facilitate organizational change or make it more difficult; it furthers or undermines the ability of the system to work as a cohesive whole. And most importantly, the quality of leadership has a major impact on the UN's ability to sustain and to give meaning to the unique set of principles and international norms that underpin the organization and lend it authority and enduring relevance.

Strong leadership and the absence of leadership both have a disproportionate multiplier effect: Strong leaders attract the best staff and bring out the best in all staff. Where leadership is absent and morale poor, those staff who can, leave. Others remain but can grow disillusioned, cynical with regard to the organization and unduly preoccupied with their conditions of service and entitlements.

Leadership is, of course, one of a number of factors including political support and resource availability that determine the success or failure of UN endeavours. Strong leadership provides no guarantee of success, but its absence provides a high likelihood of failure. General Cammaert, a former Military Adviser to the UN Secretary-General, put this succinctly:

*"You can have lots of resources, but without leadership nothing happens."*¹

While much of what determines the UN's effectiveness is hard to influence, it is possible - through improved staff selection, enhanced staff development and nurturing - to improve UN leadership.

What the study is and is not

The study is intended to contribute to the emerging debate about leadership in the UN. Its specific purpose is twofold:

- to identify the unique challenges to leadership in the UN context, and;
- to identify and examine best practices of leadership at the UN based on how some effective UN leaders addressed the challenges identified.

The focus of the study is restricted. In referring to 'the United Nations', it refers only to the UN Secretariat, UN missions, funds and programmes. It is about

¹ In a lecture to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Senior Mission Leaders Course, Vienna, 7 May 2009

leadership by UN staff as opposed to leadership by members of government, diplomats representing governments or experts in UN inter-governmental bodies such as the Security Council, General Assembly or Human Rights Council.

In looking at the UN Secretariat, funds and programmes, the scope of the study also takes a partial view. As implied in the title, it looks primarily at those UN entities that deal directly with conflict and work in politically complex and high pressure environments in the field - the circumstances that place the highest demands on leadership. Thus the study draws on examples from the UN Secretariat, in particular the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), as well as from some of the major operational agencies – the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

While there are important differences in focus, procedures and organizational culture, between UN Secretariat departments and UN agencies, between UN headquarters and UN field operations, many of the demands on leadership – as they emerged from the interviews upon which this study is based - are similar. The study therefore dwells little on the differences between the UN entities listed above.

Sources

The study draws on the best practices of recent former UN leaders who are broadly recognized as having been effective: in particular Sadako Ogata, Louise Arbour, and Sergio Vieira de Mello. The study also draws on the example and pronouncements of other former UN leaders, including two who in different ways are often seen as exemplary: Dag Hammarskjold and James Grant. Best practices of Kofi Annan are also highlighted. The study is not a critical evaluation of the performance of individual UN leaders. The intention in referring to former individual UN leaders is to gather best practices and authoritative views on UN leadership. The study generally tries to avoid contemporary examples from UN officials still serving in a UN role.

The study relies on the varied body of reading indicated in the bibliography, encompassing both studies on the UN and biographies on prominent UN leaders, as well as generic academic works on leadership.

For the specific purpose of gathering new material for this study, more than fifty interviews were undertaken with the individuals indicated in the list in the Annex. These individuals range from current and former senior UN leaders (including Annan, Ogata and Arbour) through to current and former UN staff at other levels in different functions and duty stations across the organization. Interviews were also undertaken with a number of professionals involved in leadership development within the organization. Where quotes are not otherwise sourced, they draw from these interviews.

The study also draws on the experience of the author in a twenty year career in the UN, which has included assignments on different continents with UNHCR, UNRWA, OCHA and in several peace-keeping missions, as well as with OHCHR. The author worked directly for Vieira de Mello and Arbour as well as under the Chef de Cabinet of Ogata.

How the study unfolds

The study is divided in to three main chapters: The first chapter sets a broad framework for examining leadership in the UN context by summarizing the main lessons from the generic leadership literature. Those who are familiar with this literature will be able to skim through this chapter.

The second chapter examines the particular challenges to leadership in the UN context. What are the specific differences to leadership in the UN? What contradictions do UN leaders have to manage? To what extent does the organization encourage or discourage leadership? How does the UN choose those who are expected to provide it with strategic leadership?

The third chapter analyses and draws lessons from the practices of recognized UN leaders: How have effective leaders in the UN created room for leadership? What is excellence in UN leadership about? What attributes and what behaviour models make leaders effective in a UN context? How have UN leaders managed with multiple, mutually incompatible demands of stakeholders? How have UN leaders advanced international norms and ideals in difficult or hostile environments?

Finally the Conclusion summarizes ten main points that emerge from the study and briefly looks at the issue of weakness in UN leaders.

Chapter One: Leadership, an Overview

A short lesson in leadership:

Six most important words: 'I admit I made a mistake.'

Five most important words: 'I am proud of you.'

Four most important words: 'What is your opinion'

Three most important words: 'If you please'

Two most important words: 'Thank you'

One most important word: 'We'

Least important word: 'I'

(From John Adair, "Effective Leadership")

In private enterprise and the public sector, in academia and in popular culture, there is unprecedented focus today on the theme of leadership. Professor John Adair, a prominent leadership author and, since 2008, advisor to the UN system staff college – refers to a "*leadership revolution*"².

According to Adair, in the pursuit of recipes for what makes companies and organizations effective the emphasis has shifted over past decades from a focus on administration and management to a preoccupation with leadership. He links this to the contemporary dominance of change: "*Change throws up the need for leadership and leadership brings about change.*"³

Leadership today is a multi billion dollar global industry. The number of books and articles on leadership is large and rapidly growing. An amazon.com search, for example, yields over 2,000 available titles. A proliferation of books and articles has been paralleled by the emergence of an unprecedented number of courses and professional leadership coaches.

Amidst this bewildering abundance, this chapter is not intended to be an authoritative account of the current state of leadership scholarship but instead will provide a basic framework for the analysis of UN specific leadership challenges and best practices. It draws both on the work of established leadership academics as well as on more widely read leadership authors.

The generic literature increasingly takes as its subject matter, large multifaceted organisations, with complex objectives working in a globalized environment with loose hierarchies and multi-cultural work forces. It will become apparent that many of the attributes and behaviour types that emerge from the generic literature about leadership also apply in the UN context.

² From a lecture at the UN System Staff College, Turin, 9 June 2009

³ *ibid*

The chapter is divided in three main parts: First it looks at a definition of leadership, and distinguish it from management. It considers two critical determinants of leadership, context and influence. The second part describes the most frequently mentioned characteristics of leaders: leadership styles and functions. In the third part it examines other aspects of leadership: Leadership and ethics, leadership and gender, leadership and culture.

1.1 Describing Leadership

1.1.1 Definitions

There are many definitions of leadership. All tend to include one or more of the following three elements:

- a combination of specific personality traits and modes of behaviour which distinguish leaders from non-leaders;
- an influencing process and related perceptions of followers;
- a specific context which allows for leadership.

There are debates as to whether the concept of leadership is value neutral. For the purpose of this study leadership is understood as good leadership, that is leadership that in its methods and objectives adheres to a moral framework. In the phrase of John Adair, "*good leadership and leadership for good.*"⁴

In a UN context the distinction is important between leadership based on values and leadership measured on the basis of desired outcomes irrespective of moral content and regardless of means. As many of those interviewed for the study stressed the UN's authority is moral rather than being linked to resources or power. Value based leadership is thus essential to maintaining the organization's authority and leverage.

1.1.2 The distinction between leadership and management

There is a basic distinction between leadership and management. In the UN as elsewhere they can be confused. Kotter, a Harvard professor and eminent leadership scholar, describes them as "*distinctive and complementary*"⁵. He illustrates the difference between the two functions as follows:

*"A peace time army can usually survive with good administration and a management up and down the hierarchy, coupled with good leadership concentrated at the very top. A war time army, however, needs competent leadership at all levels. No one has yet figured out how to manage people effectively into battle; they must be led."*⁶

⁴ from a lecture at the UN System Staff College, Turin, 9 June 2009

⁵ Kotter, page 51

⁶ Kotter, page 53

A number of authors elaborate on the difference in the following terms: A manager ensures order and consistency and the smooth functioning of pre-existing organizational systems. He or she plans, monitors, controls and ensures that rules and procedures are properly applied. A manager administers and implements or directs implementation of an existing vision. The leader, by contrast, develops the vision and sets the direction. He or she inspires and motivates others to follow.

The manager's focus is mainly within the organization. The leadership task relates more to the big picture, the external environment, the future and organizational change. The leader is less the promoter of rules than of values, less of an administrator than an innovator. The role of the manager is to conserve and maintain the *status quo*, the leader's is to challenge it.

A manager always forms part of a formal organizational structure and has an explicit supervisory role. A leader often is, but need not be part of an organizational structure. A manager is usually appointed, whereas to be a leader an appointment or an election to a leadership position is not sufficient: A leader has to be recognized as such by others. The manager relies on control and direct supervision to influence others. The leader influences by inspiring trust, through vision and through upholding values.

The distinction between manager and leader is not always straightforward and can be overemphasized. The functions will often overlap. John Hailey, an academic who has also been involved in leadership development in the UN, states:

*"any analysis that makes a clear distinction between managers and leaders can be misleading. Effective leaders have to demonstrate some managerial skills, and good managers display leadership qualities."*⁷

Some of those interviewed for this study indicated that in the UN there can be a tendency to equate leadership with management. The distinction of management and leadership is useful in a UN context because it points towards a dimension of tasks that goes significantly beyond regular management functions.

1.1.3 The Importance of Context

The different demands placed on leadership and management capacities in an army in combat and one in peace time illustrate the importance of context. Context is important from a number of perspectives but in particular because it determines two basic things: The amount of space there is for leadership and the type of leadership that is required.

⁷ Hailey, page 4

Different contexts place different demands on leadership

Certain contexts call for leadership skills with others placing greater emphasis on management abilities. A number of writers note that crisis situations or situations close to crisis place particularly high demands on leadership:

"In equivocal situations followers need exceptional individuals to deliver them from their plight."⁸

The UN entities referred to in this study deal with crises and hence high demands are placed on the leadership abilities of their staff. This can create tension as, in general, large bureaucracies – like the UN - by their nature diminish the potential and space for leadership. Roles and behaviour in such structures are specialized and highly regulated, there is little room for innovation and little appetite for change. It is no coincidence that in the UN effective leaders can often be at odds with the bureaucracy.

Different contexts demand different types of leadership

Apart from crises levels there are many other contextual variables that determine the type of leadership required. One is the number of people that are to be led and the nature of the associated task. John Adair distinguishes between three basic leadership layers. These are: team leadership, operational and strategic leadership.

This study focuses principally on strategic leadership. Strategic leadership involves the coordination and maintenance of the organization or department as a whole, the establishment of structures and the definition of organizational purpose⁹. Team and operational leadership are more narrowly focussed roles. Strategic leadership brings with it greater breadth of responsibility, increased visibility and greater complexity.

The context may be more important than the leader

What is more important in determining organizational success, leadership or other contextual factors? Some argue that the role of leaders tends to be overstated. John Gardner, a major leadership authority who worked for six US presidents, points to the tendency *"to aggrandize the role of leaders"* and exaggerate their capacity to influence events. He argues that one is inclined to do this because *"by attributing outcomes to an identifiable leader, we feel, rightly or not, more in control."*¹⁰

Most authors conclude that the exercise of leadership is dependant on a match between propitious circumstances and the right individual(s) for that context. Many stress that contexts have to be conducive and different contexts require different leadership attributes. There are no personality traits that can guarantee successful leadership in all contexts.

⁸ Antonakis, page 9 also Gardner, pages 34 and 35

⁹ from Cynthia D. McCauley, *Successful and Unsuccessful Leadership*, in Antonakis et al page 212 and 215

¹⁰ Gardner, pages 8/9

Due to the importance of context, many stress that effective leadership depends on an ability to read the specificities of a situation or context and adapt accordingly. Being sensitive to context and being able to behave flexibly across different situational constraints are therefore necessary leadership traits.

But leaders also influence context

A leader is defined by a number of authors as someone who can at least to some degree transcend the constraints of context. Warren Bennis, often referred to as one of the leading authorities on leadership, describes this as a major difference between manager and leader, one surrenders to the context, the other transforms it:

“The first step in becoming a leader ... is to recognize the context for what it is -- and declare your independence.”¹¹

A number of authors also suggest that leadership effectiveness is determined in particular by an ability to influence organizational culture, an important aspect of context. This can be challenging because - as Edgar Schein, a specialist on the topic explains - explains: *“culture serves as an important anxiety reducing function, members cling to it even if it becomes dysfunctional in relationship to environmental opportunities and constraints.”¹²* Thus, Schein points out, in some organizations the culture manages the management rather than the other way around.

1.1.4 Power, influence and followers

Leadership is more about the exercise of influence than it is about the possession of power. While leaders by definition hold some power, not all power holders or persons of high rank, lead:

“We must not confuse leadership with status...even in large organizations, the top ranking person may simply be bureaucrat no 1.”¹³

Influence implies not only inducing action but also changing thinking and perception. It is less related to formal than informal authority, which can be derived *inter-alia* from relevant knowledge and expertise, from the power of persuasion and by developing systems of mutual dependency and obligation.

¹¹ Bennis, pages 20 and 41

¹² Schein, pages 377 and 378

¹³ Gardner, page 55 and 56

Influence attracts followers and followers influence leaders

A leader is only a leader because others think so. Leaders can not exist without willing followers. The word 'follower' may appear too passive a term but it is complementary to that of leader and, as stressed here and in subsequent sections, the influencing process is seldom if ever one sided: Leaders are also shaped by their followers. Gardner points out:

*"Leaders are never as much in charge as they are pictured to be... Leaders, to be effective, must pick up signals coming to them from constituents."*¹⁴

Effective leadership validates followers and lends them a sense of self-assurance and purpose. Followers for their part, make the leader a symbol of their aspirations and hopes. To achieve a level of complicity, leaders have to respond not only to formal, explicit demands and criticism of followers, but also be in a position to understand and respond to their unexpressed aspirations, hopes and fears.

Leadership requires a conducive predisposition among potential followers as well as the display of the appropriate leadership characteristics or behaviour. The process of mutual influencing will be greatly facilitated or inhibited by the extent to which there is a shared framework of values and culture. This is particularly relevant in a UN context where there are diverse staff who come from multiple national, professional and organizational cultures.

1.2 Leadership characteristics, styles and tasks

1.2.1 Favoured leadership characteristics

What are the defining attributes and skills of leaders? John Adair has observed: *"leaders tend to exemplify the qualities required in their groups."*¹⁵ As indicated, leadership is a combination of skills that vary according to context, but nevertheless, in the leadership literature some basic attributes reoccur. These attributes apply to most contexts, including the UN. They can be reflected under nine loose headings (A - I). Some of the more specific attributes demanded by the UN context are elaborated in chapter three.

A. Self-Knowledge and emotional intelligence

Self-knowledge, self-awareness and self-mastery often feature as the cornerstones of leadership: *"(Leaders) know who they are, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and how to fully deploy their strengths."*¹⁶ For this reason UN and other leadership development courses all contain exercises to enhance self-knowledge and self-awareness.

¹⁴ Gardner, pages 23 and 26

¹⁵ From a lecture at the UN System Staff College, 9 June 2009

¹⁶ Bennis, page xxxi

The importance of self-knowledge is also linked to the moral dilemmas of leadership and vulnerability of leaders: *“The moral challenges of power and the nature of the leader’s job explain why self knowledge and self control are, and have been for centuries, the most important factors in leadership development.”*¹⁷

Self-awareness is a component of emotional intelligence, the ability to manage one’s own emotions and to read others correctly. The importance of emotional intelligence is often stressed as an important leadership attribute. It can be particularly relevant in a UN context because of the potential for tension and misunderstanding in a context where diversity prevails.

B. Intelligence, intuition and creativity

Intelligence is one of the most studied leadership characteristics. More recent literature emphasizes intuitive insight and creativity as much as analytic intelligence. Leaders *“must be intuitive, conceptual, synthesizing and artistic.”*¹⁸

Leaders – not least in the UN - tend to work in circumstances which require decisions without necessarily always having the full picture. There is always an element of the unknown. Intuition and imagination are thus important and allow leaders to see ahead of the game.

Gardner stresses that intelligence has to be combined with judgement, the *“ability to combine hard data, questionable data and intuitive guesses to arrive at a conclusion that events prove to be correct.”*¹⁹ He also highlights the ability to translate analysis into action, *“judgement in action”* or practical wisdom. Related to this are problem solving skills, which again demand openness and creativity.

C. Authenticity and Integrity

Linked to self-knowledge and emotional intelligence is the concept of authenticity. Many authors stress that a leader draws strength and inspires others on the basis of being their own person. *“Leadership has nothing to do with power and rank but is a matter of self realization.”*²⁰ *“To become a leader, then, you must become yourself, become the maker of your own life.”*²¹

Integrity is related to authenticity and means acting consistently with a set of values. This critical leadership attribute can be frequently challenged in a UN context and it will be looked at it in more detail in chapter three.

Integrity and authenticity are associated with honesty and credibility. In a 2009 global survey, tens of thousands of private sector employees were asked what quality they looked for and admired most in a leader. The single preferred quality was honesty²². Credibility is posited by Bennis as a basic ingredient of

¹⁷ Joanne B. Ciulla, *Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness*, in Antonakis et al, page 324

¹⁸ Bennis, pages 97 and 135.

¹⁹ Gardner, page 49

²⁰ Lao Tzu quoted in Strozzi-Heckler, page 19

²¹ Bennis, page 48

²² Kouzes and Posner, page 20

outstanding leadership²³ and he identifies its constituent parts as: Constancy - staying the course; congruity - walking the talk; reliability - being there when it counts.

As stressed earlier at the heart of leadership is influence. The potential for influence by non-coercive means is dependent on inspiring trust. Authenticity, integrity and credibility are pre-requisites to inspire trust.

D. Courage

Since the earliest writing on leadership, arguably the most frequently cited quality is courage. Churchill referred to it as *“the quality that guarantees all others.”* Demonstrations of courage tend generally to inspire, especially when perceived to be in the service of shared values.

There are different types of courage. One is the readiness to speak up to defend values in the knowledge that what one says may not prove popular. This type of courage also allows a leader to resist inappropriate pressure, take unpopular decisions and confront others where necessary. This courage is particularly critical in a UN context.

A second, related type of courage is a willingness to challenge the status quo, seek new opportunities, be ready to experiment, and take risks without fear of failure. Bennis²⁴ suggests that *“leaders embrace error”* as without a readiness to accept error, creativity, initiative and innovation are severely constrained. He quotes a well known University of California basket ball coach who said *“failure is not the crime, low aim is.”*

E. A need for influence and an understanding of power

According to Antonakis and others, one of the most reliable predictors of leadership potential is the need for power, defined as the need to influence others²⁵. It is also described as a drive to achieve²⁶ or more bluntly as ambition. It can go hand in hand with personal humility.

As well as seeking power and influence, leaders understand how they work: *“Leaders have a good intuitive understanding of the various types of power and methods of influence.”*²⁷ They have or develop an ability to read an organizational environment and discern where power lies, who plays which role, what the invisible hierarchy is, what the political undercurrents are and where conflicts lie. This undocumented knowledge is particular critical in complex bureaucracies such as the UN where distribution of real power and influence seldom conforms to what is implied by organigrams or post descriptions.

²³ Bennis, page 35 and 152

²⁴ Ibid, page 190

²⁵ From Zaccaro, Kemp and Bader, *Leader Traits and Attributes* in Antonakis et al, page 107

²⁶ Gardner, page 51

²⁷ Kotter, page 118

F. People, verbal and non-verbal communication skills

As indicated earlier, the primary vehicle through which leadership responsibilities are carried out is through influencing other people. Interpersonal competencies are therefore central to leadership effectiveness²⁸. This embraces both the ability to understand others and read their intentions correctly, as well as being able to intervene appropriately to influence them. This is also referred to as social intelligence.²⁹

Reading others correctly, the ability to listen and to inquire – suspending one’s own views in the process - are pre-requisites to being able to communicate effectively. The ability to communicate persuasively³⁰ to different constituents with varying perspectives and worldviews is a frequently stressed leadership trait, on which great demands are placed in a UN context. Related attributes are extroversion, enthusiasm, openness and charisma – a much studied attribute in leadership studies dealt with further below.

Many more recent authors stress the importance of non-verbal communication and leadership presence, as is expressed in manner and bearing: “*A leadership presence is a fundamental and core aspect of one’s power.*”³¹ Leaders tend to be more closely observed than others and their non-verbal emotional signals have a major impact on others. They can have a determining effect on mood.

G. Self-confidence and Optimism

A variety of experiments have shown³² that those with a high degree of self-assurance are more likely to be perceived as leaders by others. The ability to show confidence is important to be able to influence and inspire confidence.

Related to confidence is a tendency to be self-directed and inner-focussed. This is related to authenticity. It also implies mental toughness, which allows one to take criticism calmly and acknowledge errors without dwelling on them. Resilience is especially important for leaders in a UN context and this is elaborated further in chapter three.

To motivate oneself, as well as others, convincing optimism is fundamental. Napoleon, described leaders as “*dealers in hope*”. They are obliged to be optimistic.

H. Adaptive capacity and the ability to perform different roles

As explained, leadership is context specific and context’s change and evolve. Adaptability, flexibility are therefore crucial:

²⁸ From Cynthia D. McCauley, *Successful and Unsuccessful Leadership*, in Antonakis et al page 208

²⁹ Goleman and Boyatzis, pages 78/79

³⁰ Gardner page 51

³¹ Richard Strozzi-Heckler, page 183

³² See Roya Ayman, *Situational and Contingency Approaches to Leadership*, in Antonakis et al, page 153

“Adaptive capacity is what allows leaders to respond quickly and intelligently to relentless change... it also encompasses the ability to identify and seize opportunities.”³³

I. Engagement and detachment

Leaders set an example and to be able to influence others have to be seen to be fully engaged themselves. They inspire through dedication, passion and commitment. They are involved and aware of detail. At the same time to bring added value they have to have a sense of the big picture and can not be swept away by the mood of the moment. They retain a critical distance even from their own most heartfelt views.

They combine engagement with detachment. In a 2007 UN leadership development course run by Piers Campbell - of MANNET a organizational development consultancy - he compared a leader’s ability to get involved at times with detail while retaining awareness of the big picture, to the action of a zoom lens that can expand and restrict focus according to need.

The capacity for detachment, including self-detachment, is also critical to be able to treat criticism justly and with equanimity:

“A mind that can stand enough apart from its own opinions, values, rules and definitions to avoid being completely identified with them... is able to keep from feeling the whole self has been violated when its opinions, values, rules and definitions are challenged.”³⁴

³³ Bennis, pages xxvi and xxvii

³⁴ Kegan, page 231

1.2.2 Leadership styles

More recent literature tends to talk less about characteristics and attributes than about leadership behaviour and styles. Six basic styles were identified by Daniel Goleman³⁵ (most known for popularizing the notion of emotional intelligence) based on research undertaken with 20,000 executives. These are:

Coercive or commanding leaders demand immediate compliance; “Do what I tell you”.

Authoritative or visionary leaders mobilize people toward a vision; “Come with me”.

Pace setting leaders expect excellence and self-direction; “Do as I do now”.

Affiliative leaders create emotional bonds and harmony; “People come first.”

Democratic leaders build consensus through participation; “What do you think?”

Coaching leaders develop people for the future. “Try this”.

Goleman’s styles distinguish leaders on the basis of the attitude with which they approach potential followers, and in particular how they approach decision making in relation to followers. The styles move on a continuum from autocratic decision making to encouraging followers to make decisions.

Another prominent leadership author, Cynthia McCauley³⁶, refers to four basic approaches of leaders towards followers, which can be correlated with Goleman’s styles:

Directive: gives clear instructions and demands compliance (the coercive leader)

Achievement oriented: sets ambitious goals and high standards and expects followers to meet them (the visionary or pace setting leader).

Supportive: expresses concern for followers and creates a conducive work environment. (usually the affiliative or coaching leader but can also be the coercive or visionary leader).

Participative: involves subordinates in decisions and takes their views and suggestions into account (the democratic leader).

³⁵ Goleman, pages 79-90

³⁶ Cynthia D. McCauley, *Successful and Unsuccessful Leadership*, in Antonakis et al page 205

Goleman stresses there is no best style but that each will be appropriate in a different situation. McCauley also stresses that the behaviour type adopted will vary according to the type of followers and task at hand: In times of crisis with inexperienced followers a commanding or directive leader may be required. Change demands a visionary leader; to heal rifts needs a participative or affiliative leader; to get results from a competent team requires a pace setting or achievement oriented leader. The best leaders can switch approaches as context and needs change:

“Leaders with the best results do not rely on one leadership style; they use most of them in a given week – seamlessly and in different measure – depending on the ... situation.”³⁷

The ability of effective leaders to switch styles easily according to the demands of a situation, has led many to suggest that leaders are essentially performers. Bennis refers to leadership as a “*performance art*” involving “*artifice and the perception of authenticity.*”³⁸

Leaders who are perceived only as actors will suffer a credibility deficit. Some UN leaders who were particularly polished performers have suffered times from allegations of lacking sincerity. As noted above, whatever role is assumed by the leader, to gain and trust and be able to influence, they also have to be seen as authentic.

A 2005 article in the Harvard Business review, by authors Goffee and Jones, explores the tension between adaptability and authenticity: it suggests that leadership demands “*managed authenticity*”³⁹. Leaders must have, in the words of John Hailey, chameleon-like abilities to adapt⁴⁰ without prejudicing their integrity.

1.2.3 Leadership tasks – What do leaders do?

What tasks define leaders? To what challenges do they apply the defining characteristics and behaviours described? In the literature there are numerous lists of generic tasks. One of the most succinct descriptions particularly apt in a UN context - is from Harvard scholar John P. Kotter⁴¹. He notes the main tasks of leaders are twofold:

“Figuring out what to do despite uncertainty, great diversity, and an enormous amount of potentially relevant information.

Getting things done through a large and diverse set of people despite having little direct control over most of them.”

The numerous activities through which leaders seek to meet these two basic challenges are summarized under the following six headings:

³⁷ Goleman page 79

³⁸ Warren Bennis, *The Crucibles of Authentic Leadership*, in Antonakis et al page 340

³⁹ Goffee and Jones, *Managing Authenticity*

⁴⁰ Hailey 1, page 16

⁴¹ Kotter, page 150

A. Crafting a Vision

Vision setting usually leads the list of essential leadership functions:

“Envisioning exciting possibilities and enlisting others in a shared view of the future, is the attribute that most distinguishes leaders from non-leaders.”⁴²

Vision articulation fulfils a fundamental leadership objective and meets one of the most basic expectations that followers place on leaders: bringing meaning to uncertainty and direction to diversity. Vision in Bennis’ phrase, “*transmutes chaos*”. It brings clarity where there is complexity and it diverts the energy and attention of constituents towards a unifying and coherent agenda.

There are two equally important aspects to vision setting: The first is about understanding complexity - reading the environment, understanding the context, seeing where the organization fits within the broader scheme of things, and identifying the unknowns - the contradictions, tensions, threats and opportunities.

This first aspect includes gaining an understanding of client and stakeholder demands, aspirations and ideas:

“... leaders do not simply think up a vision and sell it to followers....the long term ideal that leaders come up with will derive from as well as incorporate the needs and ideas of followers.”⁴³

The second aspect of vision involves communicating it. Vision communication is a means to build follower support for the vision. As indicated, this is made easier where the vision is derived from the ideas and aspirations of followers.

Vision crafting is not a one off exercise. The vision itself is reinterpreted, adapted and modified as circumstances unfold.

B. Creating a fertile and motivating environment for followers

A second crucial leadership function is the motivation of followers and the creation of a conducive working environment, which changes followers “*from being self-centred individuals to being committed members of a group*” who “*are then, able to perform at levels far beyond what is normally accepted.*”⁴⁴

The articulation of a vision is a principal means of motivating, especially where the vision draws on the aspirations of followers, is value based and challenging. Others means of motivation include: stimulating intellectually; creating empowering opportunities; recognizing accomplishments; informing and giving people a sense of being heard and cared about.

⁴² Kouzes and Posener, page 20

⁴³ Marshall Sashkin, *Transformational Leadership Approaches*, in Antonakis et al, page 186

⁴⁴ Ibid, page 175

The ability of a leader to listen and encourage others to speak up is a prerequisite for a work environment which allows ideas to flourish and promotes problem solving. *“Fertile liberating environments almost always have two components: able leaders who listen and capable followers who speak out.”*⁴⁵ Conducive work environments will encourage not only frankness, but also creativity and risk taking.⁴⁶

Leadership that focuses on motivation, and on creating a vibrant and open working environment has also been referred to as resonant leadership. In a book with that title, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee describe such leaders in the following terms:

*“Resonant leaders... consciously attune to people, focus them on a common cause, build a sense of community, and create a climate that enables people to tap into passion, energy, and a desire to move together in a positive direction.”*⁴⁷

*“The overall positive emotional tone crafted by resonant leaders is characterized by a sense of hope... people do not necessarily feel happy or satisfied all the time but they are challenged and feel hopeful about the future.”*⁴⁸

The UN context is not generally described by staff as a conducive work environment. Bureaucracies, like the UN, can stifle energy, passion, creativity and discourage frankness and humour. To create a conducive work environment in the UN requires leadership effort.

C. Coaching

Good leaders not only motivate others, but also create room for them to exercise leadership, and coach them in the process. Jack Welch, former Chairman of General Electric, said that

*“before you become a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is about growing others.”*⁴⁹

D. Managing interconnectedness or Coalition building

Promoting collaboration within and beyond the organization is a fourth principal leadership activity. In a complex environment with diverse stakeholder agendas and without clear cut power relationships, building strategic coalitions or alliances to further goals is essential to success. ‘Lateral leadership’, as it is sometimes called, can be more important than hierarchical leadership:

“In a tumultuous, swiftly changing environment, in a world of multiple, colliding systems, the hierarchical position of leaders within

⁴⁵ Warren Bennis, *The Crucibles of Authentic Leadership*, in Antonakis et al page 337

⁴⁶ Gardner, page 128

⁴⁷ Boyatzis and McKee, page 22

⁴⁸ *ibid*, page 150

⁴⁹ Welch, page 61

their own system is of limited value, because some of the most critically important tasks require lateral leadership – boundary-crossing leadership – involving groups over whom they have no control.”⁵⁰

Networking is related to coalition building, the development of the complex web of dependant internal and external relationships through which leaders function⁵¹. Informal networks are particularly important to foster and bring about organizational change⁵². The development and fostering of networks is an indispensable leadership function and one in which effective leaders invest considerable time.

The act of building bridges across organizational, cultural and conceptual boundaries is something stressed consistently in contemporary writing on leadership. It is particularly important in a UN context and is discussed in the next chapters.

E. Establishing a leadership team

The various traits and competencies required for leadership are rarely, if ever, vested in one person. *“In reality, every successful leader possesses some of the characteristics to a great degree and is average or even below average on others.”⁵³* This can be compensated for by unifying the required competencies in a leadership team.⁵⁴

Large complex structures with diverse tasks, always depend for effective leadership less on one person than on a leadership team. The most outstanding leaders dedicate much effort to consciously assembling a team – freedom to do this is constrained in bureaucracies like the UN - that brings together complementary knowledge and attributes. They see themselves as team facilitators and encourage leadership at all levels:

“authentic leaders know... that their power is a consequence of their ability to recruit the talent of others to the collective enterprise. The lone ranger has never been as dead as today. In all but the simplest undertaking, great things are done by alliances, not by large larger than life individuals, however powerful they may seem.”⁵⁵

Diversity of views is essential in an effective team. Bennis states that what distinguishes mediocre from strong leaders is the former hire people who mirror their views while the latter seek out diversity of opinion and contradiction:

⁵⁰ Gardner, page 98

⁵¹ Kotter, page 6

⁵² Ibid, page 23

⁵³ Cynthia D. McCauley, *Successful and Unsuccessful Leadership*, in Antonakis et al, page 216

⁵⁴ See Gardner pages 10, 21 and 149.

⁵⁵ Warren Bennis, *The Crucibles of Authentic Leadership*, in Antonakis et al page 335

“Leaders encourage reflective back talk and dissent. Leaders know the importance of having someone... who will unfailingly and fearlessly tell them the truth.”⁵⁶

F. Leading change

Leadership is increasingly associated with the ability to bring about change. Stable environments where change is not called for demand more emphasis on management and less on leadership. Change is the ultimate measuring stick of leadership:

“History defines successful leaders largely in terms of their ability to bring about change for better or worse.”⁵⁷

A requirement for leaders to be able to pursue change, is a tendency to question the status quo and not to succumb to the written and unwritten norms of their context. As indicated above, while being aware and sensitive to context, they are not a product of it, but instead try and reshape those aspects that require and lend themselves to change.

The organizational culture of the UN, like many other bureaucracies, can be change resistant. Many senior UN officials announce a change agenda, few succeed in making it happen. Chapter three looks at the components of some instances of successful change in the UN.

The pursuit of change places the highest demands on leaders. Leadership that focuses on change is referred to inter-changeably in the literature as ‘transformational’ or ‘charismatic leadership’. It brings together many of the elements of leadership described thus far. The defining approach of charismatic leadership can be summarized as follows:⁵⁸

Transformational leaders are non-conformist and encourage followers to think creatively and unconventionally. They demonstrate readiness to take risks and encourage others to do likewise. They are courageous and also judicious. They are realists in the sense that they recognize constraints and focus on opportunities. They tend to be exceptional verbal and non-verbal communicators, optimistic and enthusiastic. They generate goodwill and a positive disposition among their interlocutors. People wish to see them succeed.

Transformational leaders identify the right opportunities, convince followers of the need for change and provide the reassurance that allows people to confront the unknown and risk change. They *“have the ability to absorb much of the anxiety that change brings with it and ...remain supportive... through the transition phase.”*⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Bennis, page 190

⁵⁷ Joanne B. Ciulla, *Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness*, in Antonakis et al, page 310

⁵⁸ See Antonakis, pages 6/7 and Conger and Kanungo, *Transformational Leadership Approaches*, in Antonakis et al, page 182

⁵⁹ Schein page 388

Critically, they induce a sense of mission linked to a value framework among their followers. They forge identification around shared values and by giving followers a sense of mission, they raise their confidence and the value they attach to their activities. They tend to be sensitive to follower's needs. They demonstrate concern for their followers and are aware of the personal circumstances of those they work with. They also encourage talent and leadership initiative among their followers. J.M Burns, a leadership authority elucidates this approach as follows:

*"A transformational leader looks for potential motives in followers...and engages the full person of the follower. The result... is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders."*⁶⁰

Charisma, it should be noted, is not an indispensable attribute for transformational leaders. It is one means of inspiring followers to embrace a well thought through, value linked change agenda. As Bennis pointed out⁶¹ inspiration of followers often depends less on the overt indicators of a charismatic personality than the basic virtues of a capacity for vision, for empathy, an ability to foster team spirit and above all, the ability to inspire trust.

1.3 Others aspects of leadership

1.3.1 Leadership and Ethics

Transformational or charismatic leadership stresses the importance of leadership being value based. Values means a set of ethical or moral standards. What is the connection between ethics or morality (the two terms are used interchangeably here) and leadership ? The two are inter-connected from a number of different vantage points:

First, because leaders tend to be highly visible and held up as examples, their acts are amplified and their moral successes and failings carry greater weight than those of non-leaders⁶². Where they do wrong this reflects on an organization or institution as a whole and has reverberations beyond the person of the leader.

Secondly, there is a critical relationship between ethics and trust. As explained, leadership is about influence, which unless based on coercion or manipulation, requires the establishment of trust. Moral behaviour is essential to fostering and maintaining trust.

A third related point is that certain leadership positions by their nature depend almost exclusively on moral authority for influence. This is the case with senior UN positions where influence stems less from resources, power or knowledge,

⁶⁰ Quoted in Conger and Kanungo, *Transformational Leadership Approaches*, in Antonakis et al, page 173

⁶¹ Bennis pages 149ff

⁶² Joanne B. Ciulla, *Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness*, in Antonakis et al, page 302

than from the representation of UN values, standards and norms. Where an approach is not perceived to be congruent with the value system they imply, credibility and influence are forfeited.

As important as values are, they can get in the way: Leadership effectiveness and the pursuit of ethical outcomes can be in conflict. A goal of achieving results may be in friction with a desire to adhere to moral standards. The pursuit of profit versus fostering environmental sustainability is one manifestation of such a conflict. In a UN context there can be conflict between a quick facilitation of the signing of a peace deal and upholding demands for justice for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes.

This conflict between demonstrable early results and considerations of ethics can often come down to a question of short versus long term gain. A number of authors stress the perils of giving preference to short term gains:

*"The more frequently ... actions are taken without reference to a broader moral framework, the more they are taken without a commitment not to harm others, the greater the chances that tactics for short-term gain will undermine one's capacity to lead over the long term."*⁶³

Levels of ethical behaviour

What makes leadership ethical? The ethical content of leadership is manifested at various levels. The first refers to the personal morality of the leader, his or her past and present behaviour as an individual. The second level refers to the leader as a manager and the ethics displayed when relating to their staff and dealing with finance and personnel issues; the third relates to the moral content of the leader's vision and goals and the moral nature of the substantive outcomes for which they are responsible.

Personal morality

Because of the broad potential for distraction and damage to image, personal morality is the aspect of ethics most often stressed in a leadership context although it need not necessarily have any bearing on the ethical behaviour of leaders on other levels. In the US 'good' leaders can fail the personal moral standards of an administration's vetting and congressional endorsement processes. Individuals who showed outstanding moral rectitude on other levels are revealed to have not paid taxes, evaded labour laws or deceived partners.

Morality in management

At the second level, leaders are expected to be sensitive to the needs of their constituents and subordinates, to show concern, understanding and respect. They are expected not to use others for personal self-aggrandizement and show a willingness to sacrifice themselves for others. They are meant to avoid favouritism, to be fair, equitable and consistent in treating others. They are

⁶³ Kotter, page 18

expected to comply in an exemplary manner with the relevant organizational norms in managing financial and personnel resources.

Failings in conduct at this level – except where financial abuse or sexual harassment are concerned - tend in the UN to be given less weight and made less visible. They can however, have a great impact on staff morale and motivation and therefore on the performance of the organization. Again there are examples of individuals who erred in this respect, while at the same time embracing the highest standards of morality in their vision and personal lives.

Morality in the execution of strategy

The third level is perhaps the most complex and difficult to measure. How does one judge the morality of a strategy ? In terms of the vision that informed it and the intentions that lay behind it? in terms of the positive or negative consequences of the outcome ? or in terms of the manner in which it was executed ?

In ethics the idea that the morality of an act is determined primarily by the nature of its outcome is referred to as the *teleological* approach. By contrast, the *deontological* view states that what is decisive is less the outcome than the underlying intentions and manner of execution.⁶⁴

As outcomes are more tangible than intentions, people are often more inclined to think teleologically. However outcomes are highly uncertain and usually dependant on factors beyond our control and thus considering our limited powers, a deontological approach would seem more appropriate. *“Because we cannot always know the results of our actions, moral judgements should be based on the right moral principles and not contingent on outcomes.”*⁶⁵

Moral judgement and moral luck

Prioritizing ethics in one’s vision and plans is however, no guarantee of achieving moral outcomes. Moral failures are not always intentional. Moral judgement is required as well as moral integrity and vision.

*“Leaders are subject to making all sorts of mistakes, even when they are authentic, altruistic, and committed to common values. The fact that a leader possesses these traits does not necessarily yield moral behaviour or good moral decisions.”*⁶⁶

In addition to moral judgement, luck is involved. Leaders often have to take far reaching decisions based on inadequate information and with limited control over the outcome. There is high degree of risk and moral luck is an important factor in many outcomes. In an essay which has been drawn on extensively for this section, Joanne B. Ciulla, a moral philosopher who also writes on leadership, suggests, *“some leaders are ethical but unlucky, whereas others are not as ethical*

⁶⁴ Joanne B. Ciulla, *Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness*, in Antonakis et al, page 312

⁶⁵ Ibid, page 309

⁶⁶ Ibid, page 320

*but very lucky.*⁶⁷ Moral luck she points out, is fickle and does not necessarily associate with those who are moral: *“The irony of moral luck is that leaders who are reckless and do not base their actions on sound moral and practical arguments are usually condemned when they fail and celebrated as heroes when they succeed.”*⁶⁸

Morals, Culture and Context

The complexities of moral luck and judgement highlight the challenges of pursuing a moral vision. A further complicating factor is the relativity of moral values to culture and time. What in one culture is morally praiseworthy can be seen as reprehensible in another. Honour killings, for example, can be perceived as a moral obligation amongst a group of people within some cultures while universally reviled in many others.

What is deemed right and wrong is not only informed by culture but can also be contextual or linked to a professional group: To speak truth to power is in certain circumstances and among human rights advocates a moral imperative. In other circumstances, and among many diplomats it can be considered a violation of a professional code and a dangerous act of imprudence (or impudence).

In an organizational context what is important is that there are core moral standards that can be referred to and that are shared between leaders and followers. Gardner points out: *“Shared values are the bedrock on which leaders build the edifice of group achievement.”*⁶⁹ However, *“if leaders cannot find in their constituencies any base of shared values, principled leadership becomes nearly impossible.”*⁷⁰ It is also important that the moral framework dominant within the organization is not significantly at odds to what predominates in the broader cultural context.

In a UN context, given the diversity of professional backgrounds and nationalities a shared set of values can not always be taken for granted, in particular in ad hoc UN operations which rapidly recruit new staff, like peacekeeping missions. Values that should be shared have to be spelt out and actively promoted. Ciulla⁷¹, stresses the particular importance of the leadership function to make explicit and hold up fundamental organizational values. In this respect, leadership is less about promoting change than reaffirming core beliefs among followers amidst changing circumstances.

1.3.2 Leadership and Gender

How do gender differences affect leadership? Are there gender determined differences in leadership behaviour? How do traditional perceptions of gender roles impact on women leaders? There has been much research on gender differences in leadership styles, and there are divergent views.

⁶⁷ Ibid, page 309

⁶⁸ Ibid, page 309

⁶⁹ Gardner, page xii

⁷⁰ Ibid, page 113

⁷¹ Joanne B. Ciulla, *Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness*, in Antonakis et al, page 326

Women leadership styles

Much of the research reaches conclusions which broadly conform to current perceptions of gender stereotypes: Women are said to be less hierarchical, more democratic and participative in their leadership style, while men more directive, more autocratic and task oriented⁷². Women tend to be more people oriented, more sensitive to the needs of others, more intuitive, better at reading others and more flexible, while men can show greater social confidence.⁷³ Women, some research suggests, are more grounded, more attentive to detail, not inclined to stray away from facts and less given to self promotion. Men are stronger on vision.⁷⁴

The results of research are, however, not consistent: Research findings accentuating differences are often based on experiments not with experienced women leaders but with women thrust in to leadership simulation exercises for the purposes of research⁷⁵. A number of authors conclude that as far as seasoned leaders are concerned, gender based differences are not pronounced. Referring to previous studies, two experts Herminia Ibarra and Otilia Obodaru, state:

*“when other factors (such as title, role, and salary) are held constant, similarities in style vastly outweigh the differences.”*⁷⁶

Perceptions of women leaders

While the research is inconclusive with regard to the degree and nature of differences in leadership style between men and women, there is consistency in findings regarding the difficulties faced and prejudices encountered by women in assuming leadership roles in societies, where power and authority are traditionally vested in men. A series of prejudices flow *“from the incongruity that people often perceive between the characteristics typical of women and the requirements of leader roles”*⁷⁷.

Certain leadership styles are rated as positive with men but seen as negative when associated with women: *“Whereas male leaders who were perceived as autocratic were evaluated as modestly positive, female leaders perceived as autocratic were rated negatively”*⁷⁸. Women are rated more negatively than their male counterparts for behaviour deemed dominant or directive or lacking in warmth and empathy⁷⁹.

⁷² See Roya Ayman, *Situational and Contingency Approaches to Leadership* in Antonakis et al page 151, and also Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli, *Women and Men as Leaders* in Antonakis et al pages 284 and 287

⁷³ See Goleman and Boyatzis, pages 78/79 and also Gardner page 79

⁷⁴ See Herminia Ibarra and Otilia Obodaru, *Women and the Vision Thing*

⁷⁵ Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli, *Women and Men as Leaders* in Antonakis et al, page 286

⁷⁶ Herminia Ibarra and Otilia Obodaru, page 68/69

⁷⁷ Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli, *Women and Men as Leaders* in Antonakis et al et al page 293

⁷⁸ See Roya Ayman, *Situational and Contingency Approaches to Leadership* in Antonakis et al page 160

⁷⁹ Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli, *Women and Men as Leaders* in Antonakis et al, pages 293, 294 and 295

According to various authors, women leaders thus face greater demands than men. To be successful as leaders, they have to show extra competence just to be seen as equal to men and at the same time, have to appear to be warm and communal to avoid being seen as threatening. They have to both perform highly while also reassuring others that they, in part at least, conform to the image expected of them as women.⁸⁰ An added disadvantage that many have noted is that women rarely benefit from the same gender based support networks.

Roles are evolving. Traditional leadership attributes – such as public confidence or assertiveness - are no longer seen as exclusively male. At the same time, modern paradigms of leadership place greater stress on behaviour and attributes traditionally associated with women's roles. There is greater emphasis on participative decision making, team building and inter-personal skills⁸¹. This, according to some writers, means that women are: *“more adapted to emerging patterns of leadership.”*⁸²

Much of what emerges on women and leadership from the literature was also reflected in statements by UN staff interviewed for this study. Many stated that men tend to talk more while women listen better. Women UN leaders can show greater empathy and connect better with staff. While recruitment and advancement of women are formally actively promoted, some felt there is still subtle discrimination. *“Women”* as one senior staff member suggested, *“are not always listened to quite as closely in meetings.”*

With rare exceptions, women UN leaders do not come together to provide one another mutual support and advice in the same way senior male leaders do. A notable exception was highly effective but transient network made up of three senior deputies Margereta Wahlstrom (OCHA), Jane Lutte (DPKO) and Kathleen Cravero (UNDP) that functioned in 2005.

1.3.3 Leadership and Culture

A 'culture' denotes the shared assumptions, beliefs, customs and values held by a group of people. It informs the way they perceive and inter-act with the world and other people in it. Over the past twenty years much research has been undertaken on leadership and culture. The concept of leadership is present across cultures. Members of the same culture conceptualize leaders in similar ways and share a common frame of reference regarding effective leadership. The research indicates that there are significant cultural differences in what behaviour is expected of leaders and what is seen as acceptable or effective leadership. There are also commonalities across cultures.⁸³

As most leadership scholarship emanates from North America and Western Europe, the leadership literature, many argue, tends to demonstrate a regional bias. One prominent leadership scholar, Richard House, described the underlying

⁸⁰ Ibid, pages 297 and 301

⁸¹ Ibid, page 300

⁸² Gardner, page 179

⁸³ Deanne N. Den Hartog, Marcus W. Dickson, *Leadership and Culture* in Antonakis et al, pages 249 and 272

assumptions of western bias in leadership as follows: *“Individualistic rather than collectivistic; emphasizing ... rationality rather than ascetics, religion or superstition; stated in terms of individual rather than group incentives; stressing follower responsibilities rather than rights; assuming hedonistic rather than altruistic motivation and assuming centrality of work and democratic value orientation.”*⁸⁴

House led a ten year research initiative on the relationship between culture and leadership called the global leadership and organizational behaviour effectiveness (GLOBE) project. Based on earlier research principally by G. Hofstede, the project identified nine ‘dimensions of culture’, which were used to measure different national attitudes towards and expectations of leadership:⁸⁵

Assertiveness: Degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational and aggressive in social relationships.

Performance Orientation: Extent to which an organization or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.

Power distance: Degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be unequally shared. Degree to which rigid hierarchies exist and are accepted by members.

Gender Egalitarianism: Extent to which an organization or society minimizes gender roles and gender discrimination.

Uncertainty Avoidance: Extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by reliance on social norms, rituals and bureaucratic practices to alleviate the unpredictability of future events.

Future orientation: Degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future oriented behaviours such as planning, investing, and delaying gratification.

Institutional or Societal Collectivism: Degree to which the organizational, societal or institutional practice is to encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.

In-group Collectivism: Degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organization’s or families.

Humane Orientation: Degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring and kind to others.

Attitudes also differ significantly between cultures in other domains that have a bearing on leadership, for example with regard to readiness to take risks. Another important difference between cultures is the manner in which they

⁸⁴ Quoted in above mentioned article, page 253

⁸⁵ Mansour Javidan and Robert J. House, pages 289-305

accord power and status: Some primarily on the basis of individual achievement, while in others, extraneous factors are more decisive - such as age, gender, social class or profession⁸⁶.

The GLOBE research found that as well as differences in approach there are fundamental leadership attributes and behaviours that are associated in almost all cultures with effective and ineffective leadership. There is a universal preference for charismatic, transformational leadership. In almost all cultures, outstanding leaders are expected to have foresight, be encouraging, positive, motivational, dynamic and confidence builders. Across cultures they are also expected to be excellence oriented, decisive and intelligent, good at team building, communicating and coordinating. Integrity and trustworthiness are also highly valued⁸⁷. Qualities that are universally sought after among leaders, for example charisma, may manifest themselves differently in different cultures.

Some of the research undertaken by leadership experts is perceived as simplistic in its approach to cultural peculiarities by other academic disciplines. Culture based differences can easily be overstated. It should not be taken for granted that people behave differently based solely on country of origin. A study⁸⁸ of Asian and US managers found that ethnic differences accounted for little variance in approach – less variance than that determined by personality.

An individual is made up of various cultural layers impressed upon him or her by *inter-alia* national origin, social and educational background, life experiences, mentors and reference points adopted. Organizational culture and personality can predominate over national cultural peculiarities. This is particularly relevant in a UN context where tensions can emerge between the organizational culture, which is examined in the next chapter, and the national or professional cultures of those who join.

A number of authors stress that a globalized environment demands a high degree of cultural awareness. Communicating and gaining support for a vision in a diverse, multi-cultural environment requires sensitivity to differences. They stress that knowledge of the cultural prerogatives that inform others begins with becoming conscious of and making explicit, one's own cultural assumptions. As one authority on the subject, Edgar H. Schein, states:

“Cultural understanding and cultural learning start with self insight.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Deanne N. Den Hartog, Marcus W. Dickson, *Leadership and Culture* in Antonakis et al page 262

⁸⁷ Ibid, page 254

⁸⁸ Ibid, page 252

⁸⁹ Schein, page 392

Chapter Two: The UN Context

"...working for the United Nations is like working for a government in which all the political parties are in power at the same time..."

(Lourdes Arizpe, quoted in "UN Voices", page 342/343)

"A byzantine set of processes and a confusing array of players"

(Weiss et al, "UN voices", page 315)

This chapter captures some of the peculiarities of the UN context relevant to the exercise of leadership. The following questions are examined:

- What are the peculiar demands on leadership in the UN context?
- What are some of the dilemmas of leadership in the UN?
- To what extent does the UN context and culture encourage effective leadership?
- Does the UN as an institution foster and promote leadership?

Conflict related UN work – especially in the field - is carried out in situations which by their nature demand strong leadership while at the same time making the exercise of leadership trying and perilous: There are numerous stakeholders often with incompatible interests, many working under the surface and some duplicitously. The atmosphere is politically charged, the visibility high and the scrutiny can sometimes be unforgiving. Moreover, often the means are inadequate and goals unclear. Much conspires towards failure.

At the same these situations are fluid and produce opportunities as well as hindrances. The expectations placed in the UN can be an advantage as much as disadvantage. Diverse teams with many committed staff and confused mandates allow for creativity. The profile of the UN and the access it allows for, the high regard it is often held in also provide a privileged starting point for leadership.

From the interviews with current and former UN leaders and from the UN leadership literature, what emerges as defining the UN context relevant to the exercise of leadership is a combination of factors that facilitate the exercise of leadership – visibility, a recognized brand name that can lend influence - with a series of severe and not always obvious constraints. There is responsibility and the appearance of power, juxtaposed with a series of less apparent political and bureaucratic hindrances that limit actual authority. This is summed up in Shashi

Tharoor's image of the UN leader as someone who is placed on a platform in a straitjacket⁹⁰.

The chapter is divided in five parts, each corresponding to peculiarities of the UN context. The first (2.1) looks at the tension between the UN's Charter based role and the political pressures it is subjected to. The second (2.2) explores the challenges posed by the peculiar governance structures of the UN. The third (2.3) describes some peculiar facets of UN bureaucracies and UN organizational culture. Finally, parts four (2.4) and five (2.5) look at the importance given to leadership in the organization, both in the selection process of the most senior staff and as a broader priority.

2.1 Competing Purposes

Who does the UN serve? A peculiarity of the UN is that it serves many masters, and has many often competing and sometimes irreconcilable purposes. This creates a series of contradictions and tensions for UN leaders to navigate.

At the most basic level there is tension between the independent, Charter norm and value driven character of the UN Secretariat and UN agencies and the national interest driven demands and exigencies of the UN's member states. At a second related level, are the many demands the organization is subjected to in any given situation by the multiple stakeholders concerned all of whom wish to see the UN do their bidding. At a third level, there are the tensions caused by the different facets of UN work, and the multiplicity of different UN actors. These different layers are examined in the rest of this chapter.

2.1.1 The Charter values and state interests

At the heart of the UN is a paradox. Under Article 7 of the Charter, the UN Secretariat is a principal organ of the UN on par with the General Assembly (GA) and Security Council (SC). Under Articles 100 and 101, the Secretariat is an independent entity, established to serve 'We the peoples' (invoked in the first words of the Charter's preamble) and the transnational values set out in the Charter and elaborated in international conventions and norms. However, the UN is also accountable to the SC and GA and serves its membership.

Members of the GA are represented by diplomats appointed by Governments who may or may not represent the desire of their respective 'peoples'. Their national interests may or may not coincide with a broader, transnational concept of global good inherent in the values of the Charter and international norms. Many diplomats will judge senior UN officials less on their ability to uphold the Charter and promote implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international norms, than by the positions they take with regard to their own national priorities. Regardless of what the Charter provides for, few if any member states wish to see the UN act or think independently where their own interests are concerned.

⁹⁰ Shashi Tharoor, *"The most impossible job"* description in Chesterman (ed), p. 40

The UN functions on politically sensitive issues at the nexus of state interests. As former Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar stated in his 1986 lecture at Oxford:

*“the idealism and hope of which the Charter is a luminous expression have to confront the narrow dictates of national policies.”*⁹¹

Former Under-Secretary-General and lifelong UN observer Sir Brian Urquhart, refers to the same constraints: *“For all his prestige, the Secretary-General has little or no power...It is with and through sovereign Governments, which are not always responsive to the hopes and ideals he represents, that he must deal..”*⁹²

One senior UN official suggested that in the light of the political constraints, *“moral vision has to be tempered by realism. You have to be practical. We are not revolutionaries.”* A major challenge for UN leaders is to try and reconcile the narrow, national interest or government driven political pressures the organization is subjected to, with its broader moral purpose. How this can be done is explored further in the next chapter.

2.1.2 Multiple interests and the dominance of some voices

The UN's principles and independence are threatened on all sides. General Robert Gordon, a former UN Force Commander and advisor to DPKO, summed it up as *“many interests, much meddling.”* The UN is subject to numerous pressures from member states and non-state actors such as large NGOs or the media. It can quickly become bogged down and paralysed in a morass of conflicting views.

Faced with many varying and conflicting pressures, the UN inevitably prioritizes the voices of some stakeholders over others. Whose voice is prioritized will depend on mandate and focus area of the UN entity concerned and will vary according to the situation. At a political level the dominant actors are usually the most powerful member states (including the host Government in the case of field operations) and donor states where voluntary funding is required.

When the UN listens more closely to the most powerful, there is a basic assumption that to gain advantage for the less fortunate, the goodwill of the most fortunate has to be fostered first. What former Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in this regard about the Secretary-General applies more broadly:

*“(The Secretary-General's) particular concern should be to protect the weak against the strong, yet he must understand that it is often only by winning and preserving the confidence of the strong that he can hope to do that.”*⁹³

The dependence on powerful nations can limit the forthrightness with which the agenda of the less powerful can be publically promoted. As Kofi Annan told

⁹¹ James Cockayne and David M. Malone, *Relations with the Security Council*, in Chesterman (ed), p. 69

⁹² Urquhart, *Hammar skjold*, page 50

⁹³ quoted in Chesterman (ed), p. 69

Shashi Tharoor, quoting an Old Ghanian Proverb: *"you cannot hit a man on the head when you have your fingers between his teeth."*⁹⁴

Tension results from concurrently trying to maintain high level access and retaining the confidence of those with power, while speaking out on behalf of the powerless. Among UN political actors there is general tendency to privilege access over taking a strong, public stance. In 2008 in Sudan, for example, after the indictment on war crimes charges of the President by the International Criminal Court (ICC), senior UN officials in particular those in Khartoum, went mute and refused to curtail contacts with the indicted President.

A prevalent UN approach (from which some parts of the UN would dissent) is that a degree of deference to, and accommodation of, the powerful – however unsavoury the deeds they may have committed - is necessary to reach a desired outcome. This approach is indicative of what in chapter one was described as a teleological approach towards the implementation of the moral content of mandates: Determining of the ethical content of a course of action is the outcome, the means to reach it are not decisive.

At its worse however, a policy of privileging a seat at the table with major decision makers can become an end in itself. This, some informed observers have argued, is what happened when the UN decided to remain a member of the Middle East Quartet long after it was clear any advantage it may have had was not in proportion to the price it had to pay in terms of damage to its reputation for independence and impartiality, the curtailment of its ability to meet and influence elected Hamas officials, and to speak out without political restraint on behalf of the population of Gaza.

2.1.3 'We the peoples' are remote and have limited influence

The governance system and more informal power broking at the UN privileges state actors. The voice of *'We the peoples'* can be a more abstract consideration. The voice of *'we the peoples'* – as represented say by civil society groups - are often not present in the room. When NGOs are, their role is generally limited.

In the human rights and humanitarian field in particular, many UN officials see themselves as working or speaking on behalf of those who are less advantaged, who are in relative terms powerless: children, the undernourished, refugees and displaced persons, people in detention and victims of war and natural disasters. However, often the daily efforts and interaction of these officials, especially at senior levels, is much more with power holders than with the powerless.

The UN accounts for its actions and financial spending to States. It is the diplomats from these States who primarily judge the UN. While mandates frequently refer to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, these beneficiaries of the UN seldom play a significant role in evaluating UN performance. While they are sometimes referred to as *'clients'* or *'stakeholder populations'*, there is no systematic and rigorous attempt as there is with clients in the private sector to collect and analyse their views and adjust programmes accordingly. As the

⁹⁴ quoted in Shashi Tharoor, *"The most impossible job"* description in Chesterman (ed), page 39

former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, pointed out, contrary to what is the case with democratic governments, these groups do not have a right to vote on senior UN appointments which could be used to sanction lack of performance.

Unlike with private enterprise, the ability of UN 'clients' to influence the UN is difficult. Failures to provide adequate support and protection to victims have seldom led to apologies or sanction. In Darfur, for example, maintaining good relations with relevant national authorities and regional organizations has often counted for more than the relationship with internally displaced persons (IDPs). And yet victims have expectations of direct support by the UN. When Louise Arbour first went to Darfur in 2004, she visited an IDP camp where the issue was whether the IDPs had confidence the Government of Sudan could protect them. She asked "*Who do you want to protect you?*", and an old man replied: "*Allah, and Kofi Annan!*"

Especially from a headquarters viewpoint, aspects related to principle, to norms and the notion of the disadvantaged as clients will seem remote and abstract. Changing focus or giving real meaning to the moral content of the UN's purpose – while essential to the credibility and authority of the institution – is seldom straightforward.

What does this mean for leadership? As illustrated in the next chapter, leaders have to avoid getting bogged down in the morass of competing views and stakeholder interests. At the same, while being aware and mindful of the interests of those with power, they have to remain focussed on the difference they are making - or failing to make - for the least advantaged.

2.1.4 A reality of field work

The UN system now spends over 60 per cent of its budget on operations in the field. In the field, the gap between moral purpose and political compromise necessitated by reality is often most obvious. In the context of humanitarian organizations, this gap is described and analysed incisively in an article by Mark Walkup entitled "Policy Dysfunction in Humanitarian Organizations" (which this section draws heavily on).

As many published memoirs of UN field staff attest, the reality of field operations – even successful ones – is messy and different from what the promotional material would suggest. Whether in peace-keeping or humanitarian action, the effectiveness of UN action is hindered by insufficient resources, failing logistics, a hostile security environment, authorities unable or unwilling to help, some colleagues with dubious motives, organisational mismanagement, poorly designed programmes, the inability or unwillingness of UN and non-UN actors to coordinate their work, and the overwhelming scale of needs. Such factors make UN efforts often seem to those involved in them inadequate, and in some cases even counterproductive.

UN field staff - especially those new to the UN or the field - inevitably grapple with the contradictions of their roles: Are they really helping or perhaps making things worse? When does cooperation with authorities involved in abuses - even

if it is at times critical - become collusion or complicity? Amidst conflict and extreme poverty, how do you rationalize living a relatively privileged, well paid existence under the banner of helping the needy?

As Walkup notes, this gap - between moral rhetoric and compromises imposed by reality - can lead to a form of cognitive dissonance: psychological tension caused between a divergence of beliefs and required action. Walkup describes the impact on the organizational culture of humanitarian organizations and a variety of coping mechanisms, which also apply more broadly to UN field operations, especially those operating in similar conflict or post-conflict contexts.

He notes that amongst individual staff coping mechanisms can include overwork, detachment, transference and reality distortion. Transference refers to a tendency to place blame elsewhere:

“(aid) workers are quick to blame ‘politics’, ‘the superiors’, ‘the donors’, ‘the bureaucracy’ or ‘the host government’... they frequently claim to have no control or power to change the system and use this excuse to rationalize inaction.”⁹⁵

At an organizational level, Walkup identifies two general dynamics: delusion and defensiveness. This is fed by a distortion of reality: *“A myth of proficiency and success is often fabricated ... to mediate the distress resulting from the failure of humanitarian efforts.”⁹⁶* The myth is more than a public relations exercise. It fulfils a fundamental leadership function in maintaining morale, and helping staff justify actions not only publicly but to themselves. In this process, often unwittingly, maintaining faith in the organization, both internally and externally, can take precedence over veracity and advocacy for those who are suffering.

As part of this process, the significance of achievements can be overstated, failures not fully acknowledged, and negative aspects of a reality downplayed and benignly presented as “challenges”. More candid accounts of reality can be criticized as unhelpful to the promotion of solutions (for example, this argument was used by some UN actors in early 2009 as a justification for not publishing available and alarming casualty estimates from the war in northern Sri Lanka.)

The stark analysis of Walkup is echoed in a more populist fashion in many of the public criticisms that predominate on UN work, such as Adam Lebor’s “Complicity with Evil, the United Nations in the age of modern genocide.” The particular tendency for the UN to employ an excess of self serving optimism in its public reporting, and the dangers associated with such distortion, was also highlighted in the 2000 report of the panel on UN peace operations (‘the Brahimi Report’).

What this implies for leadership is a need to be both engaged and critical, including self-critically detached. Vision and motivation should not be provided at the cost of distortion and loss of perspective.

⁹⁵ Walkup, page 46

⁹⁶ Ibid, page 48

2.1.5 Defensiveness and passivity

At headquarters as well as in the field, the discrepancy between what the UN stands for in the eyes of *'We the peoples'*, and the compromises imposed upon the organisation, can sometimes lead UN officials to adopt an attitude of defensiveness and passivity. The powerlessness of the UN Secretariat is stressed more than the opportunities that may exist.

An emphasis on the restrictions of the role and the limited political and bureaucratic space can also lead to cynicism and resignation. There can be a self-fulfilling assumption that nothing can be done and a reluctance to attempt to bring about change. The UN, according to what has become a cliché, 'is only as good as its member states allow it to be'. According to one senior human resource specialist, senior UN staff often believe they have less influence than they have, and do not always adequately question their assumptions about what can and what can not be done. They become trapped in a negative mindset which prevents them seeing creative ways change could be brought about.

As stressed in the next chapter, the best UN leaders define themselves by seeing opportunities where others see constraints. They avoid becoming trapped in a negative mindset and create an environment where others are also aware of and believe in the possibility of bringing about change.

2.1.6 Deficient Mandates

Due to the competing gravitational forces the UN is subjected to, it is often suggested that one of the defining differences for leaders in the UN - compared with the private sector - is the lack of clarity on objectives, on what constitutes the 'bottom line'. In the words of Susana Malcorra - who spent most of her career in the private sector before being appointed in 2008 as Under-Secretary-General heading the Department of Field Support - *"In the private sector there are quarterly results to provide focus. In the UN, you are removed from direct results. Results are much more embedded in the political field."*

An additional factor that contributes to a lack of clarity on final objectives is the nature of UN mandates. The authority of the UN is derived from the UN Charter as well from more specific mandates endowed by relevant UN inter-governmental legislative bodies. Mandates task the UN and set out the authority and powers of the institution, organization or mission concerned. Some mandates are global and opened ended - like that of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights - while others, in particular those for UN peace missions, are of short duration, situation specific and periodically reviewed and revised.

Mandates give general direction to UN leaders and set out in varying levels of detail their role, their authority and the tasks expected of them. Theoretically they provide the basis for the development of a vision, of strategy and a measuring stick for success. In practice they can vary significantly in their practical utility for these purposes.

UN mandates can often be more aspirational than realistic, broad and vague, or conversely, overly limited and inappropriate to the needs at hand, ambiguous or

simply contradictory. Where a mandate is unclear, poorly calibrated to the demands of a situation or breeds unrealistic expectations, the leadership role can be handicapped.

The weaknesses of many UN mandates - in particular in peace missions - stems from the fact they are less the outcome of an analysis of needs and organizational potential than of a political negotiation process. They reflect what was politically feasible given varying or conflicting state interests, rather than necessarily what is sensible and desirable from an organizational and beneficiary viewpoint.

Many illustrations of mandates that are illogical, overly ambitious, too restricted or simply impractical can be drawn from peace-keeping. The problems of ambiguous or contradictory wording can be compounded where the UN Security Council sets out clear and ambitious tasks but fails to authorize the means to carry them out. Peacekeeping mandates tend to be particularly problematic where the views within the Security Council are divided.

An example is UN Security Council resolution 1769 of 2007, which established the joint African Union and UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). UNAMID was established under the resolution to support the implementation of a peace agreement, which for practical purposes was non-existent. The resolution also called on the mission to protect civilians while barely authorizing the force the capacity to defend itself and its own assets. Glaring contradictions in the mandate of MONUC (now MONUSCO) - the peace-keeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) - led one senior staff member in the mission to say: *"Someone came from outer space to write the... mandate... There is no logic to it."*⁹⁷

A call for *"clear, credible and achievable mandates"*⁹⁸ was one of the main recommendations of the Brahimi report. It is reiterated in the 2009 successor to the Brahimi report, DPKO/DFS's "New Horizons" non-paper. As long as Security Council members privilege political considerations over concerns related to practical efficacy, impact on beneficiaries and organizational viability, some mandates will remain deficient.

There are also examples of meaningful, timely, realistic and focussed UN mandates. Security Council resolution 1272 which established the UN Transitional administration East Timor (UNTAET) is one such example. Where UN mandates are straightforward, realistic and appropriate to the requirements of the reality in which they are to be implemented, leadership tasks are eased. More time can be spent by leaders on vision, strategy and tactics and less time is taken up trying to justify overstepping what was too restricted or falling short of what was unrealistic in the first place.

Given the weakness of many UN mandates, as explored in the next chapter, the strongest UN leaders pay due homage to their mandates but do not take them as the last word. Where they are contradictory or vague, they will try and turn this

⁹⁷ quoted in Glyn Taylor, Victoria Holt OCHA/DPKO sponsored independent study on protection of civilians in peace-keeping November 2009, Chapter 2, page 1

⁹⁸ page

to the organizations' advantage by using the contradictions and imprecision to shape the direction they see fit. Sadako Ogata, for example, stretched UNHCR's mandate for to help provide solutions to refugee crises by providing assistance in former Yugoslavia and northern Iraq not only to refugees but also to those who if unassisted would have become refugees.

2.2 UN Governance structures

Many of the political challenges mentioned above are related to the unique governance structures of the UN system. The relationship between UN entities and their respective governance mechanisms is highly complex in ways which are not broadly appreciated.

The peculiarities of UN governance have major implications with regard to UN leadership: Governance entities are large, unwieldy and time consuming. Senior UN staff will seldom succeed without the sustained support of their governance body. Where UN executive heads become adept at rallying support in the relevant governance body, they can remain in office long after their tenure has ceased to be in the best interest of the organization concerned. As there is a tendency for such bodies to get involved in management decisions, effort has to be spent on trying to understand and uphold a division of labour.

Governance structures agendas do not necessarily coincide with the best interests of the organization or its beneficiaries. Management and programme decisions are unduly politicised and agency heads and senior staff can be drawn in to a political game where beneficiary and organizational interests can be instrumentalised, treated as incidental or ignored. The organization's interests may well also be undermined with members of the Governance structure from within, as senior staff may have divided loyalties.

The particular characteristics of UN governance structures have been critically and authoritatively analysed⁹⁹ by Piers Campbell and Judith Hushagen of MANNET. Their findings are summarized in the analysis below, under the following three headings:

2.2.1 *The dual role of UN governance structures*

A peculiarity of UN governance structures are their dual roles which require different approaches which are however, seldom clearly distinguished. One is that of institutional or organizational oversight, which entails providing high level, strategic guidance, support and endorsement of policy and budgets. A second, distinct role is the establishment through formal and informal means of international norms, agreements and standards.

The two demand different approaches: in overseeing an organization, the primary concern should be giving clear, strategic direction on the basis of collective decisions of the best interest of the organization and its 'clients'.

⁹⁹ in *The Governance of inter-governmental organizations*

When it comes to international norm setting however, the promotion of national interest plays a greater role. The aim is less to seek a collective decision to provide unambiguous guidance on what is best for an institution, than to promote and protect national interests and to this end to negotiate compromise often based on ambiguity.

The problem with the dual role is that institutional oversight responsibilities tend to be approached in the same political mindset as negotiation for international agreements. National and regional interests predominate over what makes sense from a client and organizational viewpoint. As phrased in the Campbell/Hushagen paper:

“As a result, relatively unimportant management decisions can become politicised and deals may be made on internal organizational issues that have very little relevance to the broader strategic and policy picture.”¹⁰⁰

2.2.2 Vested interests

An added peculiarity and layer of complexity is that Member States are rarely disinterested observers, and consequently oversight is not provided in an impartial manner. There is a clear difference between the states who are recipients of the organization’s assistance and the donors. The latter will often see the organization as an implementing agency to further their national agendas and international goals. Neither donors nor recipient countries will necessarily have the organizations’ broader interests or the broader interests of its clients as their primary concern.

As Kofi Annan candidly pointed out in his last major reform proposal in 2006, as a result of a disproportionate say of donors: *“many states have cause to feel excluded from any real say in the affairs of the Organization and are driven to assert their influence by using the only means they believe is available to them – that is withholding their support from some of the many decisions, particularly on administrative and budgetary matters, for which consensus is required.”¹⁰¹*

As a result of these special interests, there is a blurring of the distinctions between governance and management. The *“well-defined division of functions”¹⁰²* between UN entity and governance body that Kofi Annan saw as essential to the effective functioning of the former breaks down; UN Governance structures become involved in programming and management and politicize these processes.

2.2.3 Other factors mitigating against good governance

A number of other factors add further complexity to the relationship between the UN and its governance structures: Member state representatives in

¹⁰⁰ page 22

¹⁰¹ In the 2006 Report to the GA *“Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide.”* A/60/692, paragraph 15

¹⁰² In 1997 Report to the GA *“Renewing the United Nations: A programme for reform.”* A/51/950, paragraph

governing bodies do not always speak for their capitals, or may represent only one view where there are a variety of views within the government concerned. Moreover, delegates from the same country can pursue different views in different UN governing bodies. State representatives have very varying degrees of knowledge of the organizations and complexity of the issues concerned, and different levels of resources to follow and participate in UN processes. Some are well equipped, others less so. Few are experienced with management matters.

Moreover, as diplomatic missions are favoured for recruitment of UN staff, the manner of interaction of some state representatives will be influenced by their desire to gain a UN appointment. In addition, as some UN staff will have come from diplomatic missions, or - in the case of executive heads - have been recruited with their support, there will be manifold demands on their loyalties, and the interests of the organization and its clients may not necessarily be given the exclusive focus they merit.

In an interview for this study, Kofi Annan stressed the difficulty posed by the sheer number of states in governance structures. *“Boards in private enterprise are made up of 10 to 15 people. Imagine trying to run a company with a board of 200 people on it, each with their own agenda!”*

2.3 Features of UN bureaucracies

In Sadako Ogata’s farewell speech to her staff after ten years as High Commissioner for Refugees and head of UNHCR, the former Japanese academic emphatically stressed the danger of bureaucracy to creativity and free thinking:

*“My greatest advantage was that I did not come from a bureaucracy... academic life has taught me to be free in my thinking... Don’t be bureaucratic. Keep thinking.”*¹⁰³

Gardner points out¹⁰⁴ that bureaucracies, in general, do not leave much room for spontaneous, leader like behaviour: roles are pre-defined and behaviour is determined by the position one occupies. Many roles are specialized and all behaviour is heavily regulated by a plethora of standard procedures, rules and regulations. Bennis makes a similar point: *“Most leadership today is an attempt to accomplish purposes through (or in spite of) large, intricately organized systems.”*¹⁰⁵

In large, highly structured bureaucracies, leadership is both more difficult and more necessary than elsewhere to counter atrophy, bring about change and ensure relevance. Many of the features used to describe the UN - slow capacity to respond and adapt; multiple decision-making layers; heavy, hierarchical structures - are, common to most bureaucracies. Five peculiar dimensions of UN bureaucracies relevant to leadership are outlined below:

¹⁰³ Sadako Ogata, page 344 ff

¹⁰⁴ Gardner, page 41

¹⁰⁵ Bennis, page xiii

2.3.1. Outdated structures, rules, procedures and attitudes

As explained in Kofi Annan's 2006 "Renewing the United Nations" report, the UN has undergone major changes over the past few decades but management systems have not kept pace. The UN Secretariat started with some 500, mainly New York and Geneva based staff focussed on conference servicing and multilateral diplomacy. In 2009, the UN system – not including the Bretton Woods institutions – manages over 200,000 people – of whom half are peacekeepers and more than sixty per cent are in the field¹⁰⁶. Peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, development and human rights operations "*have displaced diplomacy as the organization's central task.*"¹⁰⁷

As Annan pointed out in the 2006 report: "*A vastly expanded and altered range of activities calls for a radical overhaul of the United Nations Secretariat – its rules structure, and its systems and culture.*"¹⁰⁸ While there have been incremental changes, the radical overhaul has not happened in the UN Secretariat. Annan's report lists candidly many of the resulting problems.

UN Secretariat rules and procedures are slow and cumbersome and not conducive to the rapid pace of field environments. They are also hard to understand and decision making responsibility is not clear. There is "*a Byzantine set of processes and confusing array of players*"¹⁰⁹. Kyung-wha Kang - the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights who joined the UN after a career in the South Korean Foreign Service - said that she doubted if there was any single UN manager who was aware of all the rules.

The effects of a plethora of impractical rules and procedures are pernicious. As Teresa Whitfield - a former staff member in the Department of Political Affairs, and long time UN observer - stated: the UN's "*irrational rules and regulations induce defeatism or cheating... people give up on management or do nothing and hide behind the rules*". Administrative structures are seen less as a help than hindrance and competent leaders are seen as those who know how to work around them.

John Ruggie - a senior official in Annan's Executive Office, and principal architect of his 2006 reform proposals - made an explicit link between the bureaucratic deficiencies and UN governance: "*The problem with the UN is... that the systems are still screwed up. And the systems tend to be screwed up largely because of extensive micromanagement by governments.*"¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ As of 30 June 2009 there were 93,000 uniformed and 23,000 civilian personnel in peace-keeping. According to Weiss (page 110) there are another 75,000 staff in the UN Secretariat, Funds, Programmes and specialized agencies. In addition there are over 29,000 staff in UNRWA who are sometimes overlooked in the statistics.

¹⁰⁷ David Kennedy, *Leader, Clerk or Policy Entrepreneur*, in Chesterman (ed) page 173

¹⁰⁸ paragraph 7

¹⁰⁹ Weiss et al, page 313

¹¹⁰ quoted in Weiss et al page 335

2.3.2 Misalignment of responsibility, authority, accountability and resources

Effective management is also made more difficult by what the former Under Secretary General for Management, Joseph Connor, was said to have referred to as a misalignment of responsibility with authority and of accountability with resources. UN managers have significant responsibilities but no corresponding authority over resources. Accountability is unclear or dispersed. Leaders have responsibility but little power.

Mark Malloch-Brown said of his move from heading UNDP to being Annan's Chef de Cabinet, it *"was a much bigger step down than I had anticipated ... I found when it came to management and budgetary matters - he (the SG) was less influential than I had been."*¹¹¹ Managers, in particular in the Secretariat, have limited say on their budgets, on deciding on whom to hire, on which posts exist, and they can not separate underperforming staff. *"Managers are not managers, because they don't control resources,"* in the words of Piers Campbell.

Kofi Annan himself expressed amusement when his job was compared to that of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the private sector: *"I have no real power, no real control over resources – this is an organization that is everything to everyone ... I have no real autonomy."*¹¹² A lack of autonomy and flexibility for resource management within a clear system of accountability was also noted by the Brahimi report as a critical weakness for leadership in peace missions.

"Much is expected of senior leaders" as a former UN Force Commander General Gordon stated *"but little is done to help them succeed."* There is little authority delegated for resource management and while there is at times greater delegation for personnel administration, rules and procedures are so cumbersome as to make the added benefits of limited significance. As Fatemeh Ziai, a DPKO staff member who also worked in the Secretary-General's Office noted, by hook or by crook, the system will try and accommodate the wishes of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs) and agency heads, but less connected middle managers inevitably experience much more frustration.

Margareta Wahlstrom - who had highly successful career in the Red Cross movement - joined the UN as a Deputy SRSG in Afghanistan in 2003. There she was responsible *inter-alia* for humanitarian coordination. She had an abrupt introduction to resource management in the UN and the fact that central support functions can dominate over programme delivery. She was visiting UN warehouses containing old relief items that needed distribution. A low-ranking administrative colleague from the mission asked her what she intended to do with the items: *"I will get some trucks and have them distributed"* she said, taken aback as the answer was obvious. *"But you don't have any trucks"*, the colleague replied: *"I control the trucks."*

The problem of lack of control over staff and resources are often compounded by inadequate resources for the task required. Peace missions flounder and are

¹¹¹ quoted in Weiss, page 196

¹¹² in Stig Holmquist film

discredited because the troop numbers and equipment is not adequately related to the demands of the situation or the mandate. Humanitarian operations fall short because of providing the succour they promise for lack of funding. The problem of a lack of resources is made worse by the severe constraints and heavy procedures set by the rules which limit possibilities of reallocating resources according to changing priorities between budgets or budget lines.

The genuine bureaucratic constraints of limited resources and excessive regulation can be compounded by an attitude which exaggerates the constraints and stops perceiving opportunities for solutions. This is also related to the organizational culture.

2.3.3 A conservative, risk and candour averse culture

In his 2006 reform report, Annan speaks of “*a damaged culture, which is seen as limiting creativity, enterprise, innovation and indeed leadership itself*”. The UN Secretariat culture and that of some of the agencies has been described by many staff in leadership courses as conservative, change resistant, learning averse, indecisive, defensive and slow to recognize shortcomings and acknowledge mistakes. Current Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in senior staff retreat in August 2008 also complained strongly about resistance to change in the organization¹¹³.

In particular at a senior level, and more at Headquarters than in the field, the organizational culture is felt to favour caution and discourage experimentation and creativity. This is implicit in a form for UN post descriptions, which require explicit elaboration under a separate section on the (negative) consequences of errors while making no reference to the importance of risk taking. General Gordon pointed towards natural tendency to caution in the organization: “*People want to float, not swim.*”

The system generally seems to favour the sort of leader that matches Urquhart’s description of former Secretary-General Waldheim: “*very much the limited and cautious but reasonably efficient civil servant that the permanent members of the Security Council probably preferred.*”¹¹⁴

A related feature of UN culture was highlighted by Martin Griffiths - the former deputy head of OCHA, and current head of a major conflict resolution foundation, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC). The pressures of member state interests, expectations of NGO and other lobbyists, stresses on diplomatic form and multi-cultural composition of the staff all induce a strong orthodoxy of political correctness. This leads, in Griffiths’ words, to “*invidious corruption*” in the form of “*self censorship and constant trimming*” in which individuals seldom say quite what they really think for fear it may offend or might not conform. People seek the middle ground and hold to prevailing views. Fostering an atmosphere where staff talk freely is a challenge for UN leaders.

¹¹³ SG remarks in Turin on 29 August 2008 (iseek.un.org/webpgdept1496_4.asp)

¹¹⁴ Brian E. Urquhart, *The Evolution of the Secretary-General*, in Chesterman (ed), page 26

Linked to this is a sensitivity to, and hence avoidance of frankness, which was commented by a number of those interviewed who joined the UN at senior levels. There was tendency, some observed, to speak in “*convoluted ways*”, and some were “*easily upset*” if spoken to in manner perceived as too direct. Frank and candid are equated with brutal. “*You had to walk on egg shells,*” as one senior staff member new to the system said.

An anecdote of Louise Arbour from her time as chief prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is illustrative in this regard: She was confronted in writing by the head of the UN’s Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) with the suggestion that her indictments were not sufficiently politically balanced, in that they were not adequately spread between the different parties to the conflict. In her response - in plain, factual, unemotive, unadorned legal language referring to the statute of the court and what it said about the independence of her role - she pointed out the inappropriateness of a suggestion from within the UN Secretariat that political considerations should influence her prosecutorial strategy. The UN Legal Counsel did not take issue with the substance but restricted his comment to observing to her later with disapproval: “*We do not speak to one another like that here.*”

2.3.4 A mixed bunch of followers

Diversity

A defining and potentially value adding characteristic of the UN is staff diversity. This is universally cherished in the organization as a strength and when absent in a particular part of the UN, the credibility of the whole organization as an independent, international actor suffers.

Diversity in the UN can however, be understood at times in a restrictive and superficial manner: less as diversity of thought and opinion, than as diversity of passport holders. It can be seen less as a means of promoting creativity and using different viewpoints to gain a differentiated, nuanced view of reality, than as a means to uphold an international image by being able to showcase staff from different regions. Such a limited understanding of the potential benefits of diversity reduces what can be gained from it.

However, as a number of researchers on the subject have noted, there is no automatic link between cultural and intellectual diversity. As diversity also has the potential to be a source of friction and misunderstanding, there are times when its manifestations are suppressed under a veneer of conformity. Diversity has to be fostered and appropriately managed to become a source of strength and creativity. As Fred Kofman, an academic and consultant, noted:

“Diversity... is a double edged weapon: Provided there is a common place where the different points of view can align one another seeking a transcendent welfare, the organization learns and develops with effectiveness. When the common place is absent, the discussion creates friction and wearing away We have attributed to the leader the responsibility for creating the common place, but no leader

can substitute the individual compromise of each member of the organization.”¹¹⁵

For a benefit to accrue from diversity, an environment has to be created that allows for it. It also has to unfold within a common commitment to a core, shared vision. This will exist in some parts of the UN but is not a given everywhere. A number of those interviewed who come from Government service make the point that in particular in the Secretariat there is more rarely a comparable clarity of purpose and vision as would be taken for granted, say in a national foreign ministry.

A consultant involved in UN staff development work pointed out that UN staff often assume because they work for the UN they understand diversity, when this is not always the case. Diversity in nationality and cultural background can pose a major challenge for senior staff with little experience of managing people outside their own culture.

UN staff are diverse not only in nationality but in other areas such as professional backgrounds, levels and types of university education, in values and in languages. This places particular demands on communication for leaders, especially those who have spent the majority of their careers in one context, where staff can often be more homogenous.

Promoting and managing diversity is a key UN leadership task which is expanded on further in chapter three. It places particular demands on vision, on communication and on fostering a sense of common values. Understood as a means of encouraging creativity and gathering distinct viewpoints, it is also an often-untapped strength available to UN leaders.

UN staff as followers

A particularity of UN staff is their diversity as regards their levels of application, their commitment and loyalty to the institution, their competence with regard to the tasks their posts require them to carry out and their willingness to be led. The exercise of leadership requires others who are pre-disposed to be led. The readiness of UN staff to accept leadership is not uniform.

UN staff can be leadership resistant for a number of reasons. Arbour noted, *“there are some staff who are subservient to the system, rule-bound, uncreative and indifferent to leadership. They are wedded to a system, a familiar way of doing business, and resistant to the invitation of a new leader to pursue change.”*

Responsiveness to strategic leadership may also be inhibited by a tendency to fragmentation. Staff can identify more with the work of a particular unit, section or department than with a broader purpose. What comes from outside the unit of identification is treated with scepticism.

¹¹⁵ Fred Kofman, page 5/6

On the other hand, there can also be tendency towards individualism, which is especially striking for those UN leaders who come from more hierarchical structures. As one former military officer interviewed stated: *“Questioning of direction can be valued more highly than following it.”* Ian Martin who was Secretary-General of Amnesty International before joining the UN in 1993 said, *“in Amnesty I used to say I supervised 300 anti-authoritarians. The UN is different but not that different. Authority has to be earned, it is not a given.”*

A lack of responsiveness to direction among some staff at all levels is often related by UN observers to the entitlements UN staff enjoy independent of contribution, and the fact that, in practice, there are few sanctions for inadequate performance. For staff on a certain contract type it is practically impossible to be separated. Sadako Ogata has stated *“administrative issues and discipline issues are very complicated in the UN because there is a very heavy protection ... of staff.”*¹¹⁶

There are a large number of gifted, hardworking and highly committed staff, looking for and highly responsive to leadership. Many staff join the UN motivated by idealism. Many are anxious to see change occur in the organization and beyond and are willing to sacrifice a lot to that end. Leaders who can appeal convincingly to the values and ideals that inspired these staff to join will always find willing followers, ready also to take initiative where the space is created for them.

The attitude of individual staff also evolve. As staff surveys have attested many staff join the UN idealistic and dedicated only to grow disillusioned after being exposed to poor management.

With regard to followers, there are a number of challenges for leaders which are expanded on in the next chapter: The first is coming to terms with large differences between staff in levels of application, competence, experience and commitment. A second is that of breaking a vicious circle: Poor leadership and management, both in terms of individuals and systems, creates demotivated staff who in turn are less committed and more resistant to leadership.

2.3.5 Less a system than a dysfunctional family

Thomas Weiss, an academic who has written a number of books on the UN has pointed out the term, ‘UN system’ is misleading: *“This term implies more coherence and cohesion than is characteristic of the world body’s actual behaviour.”*¹¹⁷. Mandates and areas of responsibility are overlapping, inducing turf battles and competition for donor resources and public profile.

The rivalry, lack of cohesion and absence of real accountability to the Secretary-General have led many to refer to UN agencies and Secretariat department as feudal kingdoms. The former President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Cornelio Sommaruga observed of New York: *“C’était une lutte*

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Weiss et al, page 335

¹¹⁷ Weiss, page 72

*de baronies ... everybody was fighting for his own mandate. And they were all part of the same family!"*¹¹⁸

The perception from the 38th floor (the Secretary-General's Executive floor at UN HQ in New York) of the UN as being a system of feudal baronies dates back at least to the time of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold. Former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali made the same complaint during his tenure, and Kofi Annan commissioned a major report on UN cohesion. Annan's high level panel presented their report in late 2006 and linked the problem less to the personality of the 'barons and baronesses' than to weaknesses in governance and funding. In "Delivering as One", the challenge is described as follows:

*"...The UN's work ... is often fragmented and weak. Inefficient and ineffective governance and unpredictable funding have contributed to policy incoherence, duplication and operational ineffectiveness across the system. Cooperation between organizations has been hindered by competition for funding, mission creep and by outdated business practices."*¹¹⁹

Louise Arbour pointed out that in the UN system there is little to motivate unity of purpose. In a law firm, she noted, partners are motivated to cooperate with one another as the profitability of the partnership as a whole depends on it. In a government, officials in different positions will share membership in a party or a coalition, the continued success of which depends on their cooperation. The incentives for effective cooperation are less immediate in the UN. As a result, as Jan Beagle - a leader of UN human resources reform, and a staff member who served in senior posts for three Secretary-General's - said: *"With some exceptions, there is little cohesiveness in the system and a lot of mutual undermining."*

Inter-agency rivalry is found by many to be wasteful and particularly distasteful. After twenty five years in the UN - the last fifteen in important senior management positions in the field and at headquarters with UNICEF, UNAids and UNDP - Kathleen Cravero left to head a private philanthropic foundation. Internal UN inter-agency politics and rivalries was one the things she missed least: *"It is like hitting your head against the wall, you only realise how much it really hurts after you stop,"* she said.

In reaction to complaints of lack of cohesion, there has been a proliferation of inter-agency meetings and processes. Sadako Ogata has pointed out that the disproportionate amount of time spent by senior UN staff on inter-agency positioning within coordination mechanisms occurs at the cost of time and focus on the UN's beneficiaries. In her view the UN has grown weaker by being overly preoccupied with itself at the cost of focus on clients. She also highlighted the current stress on coordination can militate against strong, effective and independent leadership by UN entities.

¹¹⁸ quoted in Weiss et al, page 358

¹¹⁹ High level Panel report, *Delivering as One*, page

The lack of cohesion in general in the UN is exacerbated by the fact that there is much stronger organizational cohesion within many of the agencies in the outer circle than in the Secretariat at the centre. This was attested to by a number of those interviewed with experience in UN agencies and the Secretariat. A senior staff member in Office for Human Resource Management (OHRM) Sandra Haji-Ahmed - with long experience in UNICEF and the Secretariat - said: *“There is little sense of one in the Secretariat, much more so in the funds and programmes.”*

Lack of cohesion is also striking between the UN Secretariat in New York and Geneva and the UN’s peace missions scattered across the globe. The majority of national and international civilian staff in peace missions have less than three years prior UN experience. Most will not have ever visited UN headquarters in New York or Geneva and will have no concept of either as a ‘home office’. They may identify to some extent with their particular mission, but there is little to encourage them to identify with the UN as a whole .

Likewise, only a minority of UN staff at the Secretariat in New York or at other headquarters offices like OHCHR in Geneva have served in field postings. The organization has evolved significantly in terms of functions, size and importance and weight of field operations, however the mind set and procedures are in many ways still those of the Headquarters based structure that the UN was in its origins. Unlike in the more operational UN agencies, such as UNICEF, WFP or UNHCR, no system exists yet in the Secretariat to promote staff rotation between field and Headquarters. Mobility is increasingly encouraged but schemes to make it a reality have not yielded consistent results. There are signs of change: a growing number of senior staff from agencies are joining the Secretariat, and Secretariat staff on their own accord are growing more mobile throughout the system not least due to the increase in opportunities provided for by the large increase over the past decade in peace missions.

2.4 The value placed on leadership in the UN

As noted in chapter one, Professor John Adair has traced over recent decades a progressive refocusing of attention in public as well as private enterprise on leadership, which he refers to as a global ‘leadership revolution’. How has this interest in the concept of leadership permeated the UN? To what extent does the UN as an organization reflect on and give importance to the concept of leadership?

The distinction between management and leadership is important in this context. The findings of this study suggest there has been greater progress in the organization in improving management than there has been on enhancing leadership. Many of those interviewed suggested that there was still a limited understanding among senior staff of their roles as leaders. Irene Khan - a career staff member and key advisor to Sadako Ogata before becoming Secretary-General of Amnesty International - suggested that in the UN, leadership is seen as leading policy, or leading in the influencing of Governments and in negotiations. It is understood less as being about leading people.

Kotter argues that most U.S corporations were “*over managed and under led.*”¹²⁰ While over management would not apply uniformly to the UN, the notion of an inadequate capacity for leadership has been made by others: Thomas Weiss refers to combination of “*overwhelming bureaucracy and underwhelming leadership*”¹²¹ as one of the main ills of the organization.

2.4.1 Leadership and management training

The evolution of training programmes for senior staff in the UN, and the manner in which they are evolving, gives some indication of the priority the organization places on leadership. Emphasis on training for senior staff began in the early 1990’s. The initial training focussed on management and self-awareness raising. Over the past five years, the focus has shifted more to leadership or leadership and management.

Management training in the 1990’s contributed to a change in the manner in which senior UN staff viewed themselves and their role. According to Piers Campbell, when MANNET started training senior UN officials in the UN Secretariat there was reluctance among many to see themselves as managers, and some questioned the relevance to the UN of training in this area especially with material taken from the private sector. Many senior staff saw themselves as directors of technical programmes, they saw their value in their expertise and diplomatic know-how, and many were reluctant to recognize the importance of their responsibilities with regard to resource and people management.

That attitude towards management is now rare. Greater stress on a management culture and procedures is also in evidence in many other developments over the past decade in the UN, including reform of performance appraisal systems, introduction of competency based interviewing, formulation of codes of conduct and strengthening of accountability and investigative mechanisms. Currently there are many more initiatives under way to further professionalize the UN’s approach to management, including human resource management.

While senior staff generally have grown more aware of their responsibilities as managers, the extent to which they view themselves as leaders and understand the responsibilities this entails is less clear. According to Professor Adair and others, in the UN a welcome increase in emphasis on management has not been paralleled by a comparable prioritization of leadership. As a staff member involved with UN training said, while Director level staff (D1s and D2s) now recognize themselves as managers, they often come to the courses unsure of their role as leaders.

The prevalence of leadership courses is relatively new and attempts are underway to make them obligatory for staff higher than a certain grade (as is the case for example in the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)). Those involved with the courses attest to a growing demand for participation and considerable interest of professional staff at the Senior Officer (P5) to Director

¹²⁰ Kotter, page 51

¹²¹ Weiss, page 107

(D2) levels as a means to better understand what UN leadership is about and to expand their own abilities in this regard.

The UN Staff System College in Turin, Italy, was established in 2002. Since then, it has run an induction course for UN Resident Coordinators and based on this, developed a leadership and coordination skills course for UN Country Team members. Since 2009 it also has a leadership course for Director level staff (D1 and D2), which emerged from a plan to create a senior management network. The UN Secretariat has various management and leadership courses for mid level to Director level staff (P4 - D2), as do operational agencies. Special leadership workshops have also been run for senior women staff in the Secretariat and exist as matter of course in UNICEF.

There is only loose coordination between the different leadership training initiatives in UN agencies and in the UN Secretariat. Even within the Secretariat the training initiatives and content related to leadership are not always coordinated. In 2009, a learning advisory board was created at a senior level to better coordinate training in the UN Secretariat. All UN agencies advise on training done by the UN staff college.

Middle managers at courses inevitably question the value of promoting shared leadership values and a common body of management and leadership knowledge if such efforts do not include first and foremost the highest levels of staff in the organization. Current courses are all for staff from the P5 to D2 levels. With the single exception of a short course run by DPKO for serving senior mission leaders (the annual Senior Leadership Programme, SLP), there are no courses for staff at the senior USG or ASG level, despite - as indicated below - a number of staff who join the UN at this level having little prior knowledge of management or leadership.

2.4.2 Competencies

The introduction over the past ten years of competencies for selection and recruitment is often pointed to as a means of integrating leadership and management values in recruitment and promotion. They are an important means through which human resource departments try and capture the specific attributes and modes of behaviour expected of managers in their respective UN entities. The competencies identified will often coincide with some of generic leadership attributes and styles specified in the leadership literature.

The competency based interview system is now common across most of the UN system and the competencies used in the Secretariat have been approved by the Chief Executive Board (CEB), a body headed by the Secretary-General that brings together heads of UN agencies. On the basis of the competencies, detailed generic profiles have also been elaborated and published by OHRM to describe an effective manager and an effective department.

Competencies for senior managers were developed independently by UN agencies. An attempt was made to formulate six key competencies for senior

managers across the system. These were then linked through cross references to the related competencies identified by specific parts of the system.¹²²

The six cross cutting competencies proposed for UN senior management can relate to the specific UN leadership qualities described in the next chapter. They are:

- Judgement/decision making
- Communication
- Results oriented
- Building partnerships
- Getting the best out of people
- Leading change

While the use of standard competencies represents an important step to introducing greater objectivity in the recruitment and promotion process, some are sceptical of a competency based approach. The approach is seen by some academics and practitioners as deficient in its reductionist approach:

“The competency approach to leadership could be conceived of as a repeating refrain that continues to offer an illusory promise to rationalize and simplify the processes of selecting, measuring and developing leaders yet only reflects a fragment of the complexity that is leadership.”¹²³

A professional trainer and senior staff member at the UN system staff college, Malcolm Goodale, pointed out a further weakness:

“Competencies don’t measure passion, dedication commitment to the organization.”

2.4.3 A comprehensive leadership development plan

Annan’s 2006 reform report: “Investing in the United Nations” spelt out an ambitious and inspiring vision of a revitalised international civil service: *“My vision is of an independent international civil service which will once gain be known for high standards of ethics, fairness, transparency and accountability, as well as its culture of continuous learning, high performance and managerial excellence. The Secretariat will be truly an integrated field-oriented operational Organization...”¹²⁴*

To achieve this, the report stressed the importance of leadership and specifically called for *“a major new leadership development plan... to build middle and senior*

¹²² The result is a UN system competency map
(<http://www.unssc.org/web/programmes/OP/smn/>)

¹²³ Richard Bolden, page147 (?)

¹²⁴ paragraph 26

management capacity.” It also called also for greater staff mobility between headquarters and the field and suggested it should be a condition of service and a pre-requisite for promotion.

Adair and others have also stressed the importance of having a comprehensive leadership development programme - based on a unified concept of good UN leadership - that would have full buy-in at the most senior level across the organization. A more comprehensive approach would include *inter-alia*:

- A more thorough assessment process for the selection of the most senior staff, which looks at their leadership abilities;
- Greater staff mobility; career planning and staff development systems, including fast track programs for those identified with leadership potential; training and coaching especially for the most senior staff
- A sanction and reward system linked to performance.

Some UN agencies – in particular UNICEF - have advanced with the development of initiatives in this respect, but these initiatives are largely undertaken in isolation of one another and without reference to a broader UN leadership development strategy. In the UN Secretariat elements of a comprehensive leadership development strategy are now being brought together but the vision set out in *“Investing in the United Nations”*, of a single vision for UN leadership backed up by a comprehensive plan is still evasive. Given the institutional divisions within the UN, including within the UN Secretariat, some question whether comprehensive plan - that is detailed and meaningful - is a realistic goal.

2.4.4 Leadership less valued by UN leadership than by HR professionals

Amongst human resource (HR) and UN staff development professionals there is a clear recognition of the importance of management and leadership capacity for senior staff. It is reflected in the 2005 GA report on a proposed Senior Management Network, which - pre-empting the SG’s 2006 Report Investing in the UN - states unambiguously:

“Successfully meeting the challenges facing the organizations of the common system requires strengthened leadership and management capacity, as well as an enhanced ability to work together. Managers in the United Nations can no longer be only substantive experts; they must also be leaders of people and managers of resources information and change, operating in a complex multicultural environment.... They require the tools and strategies to become more creative, versatile and multi-skilled managers who are client oriented, team builders, strategic thinkers, who are less risk averse and able to work collaboratively within and across the organization.”¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Senior Management network, paragraph 2

According to a number of those interviewed, while there are a number of important new initiatives being introduced for staff at the director level and below and there is a drive for more emphasis on leadership skills and knowledge from training and human resource departments, it is not consistently seen as a major priority by the leadership itself (an exception is always made of the former Deputy Secretary-General, Mark Malloch Brown). As one senior staff member who has been involved with these issues for many years suggested:

“At the top level there is lip service, but no consistent commitment to ensuring excellence in leadership and management. Ultimately political prerogatives are seen as more important.”

Stressing the importance of leadership at the most senior level would imply greater need for a more formal assessment process and there is a resistance to assessment at the most senior levels except in terms of political suitability.

2.4.5 Leadership comes from below

Many of those interviewed stressed that the effect of the leadership adverse nature of the UN bureaucracy was not so much that there is no leadership in the UN, but that where it happens, it occurs despite - rather than because of - the system. As many of those interviewed suggested, leadership in the UN tends to happen by chance rather than design.

As leadership at a senior level can be haphazard, the system often depends heavily on leadership being exercised from below. Leadership initiative frequently comes from staff at a level lower than the political level.

Maria Hutchinson who is head of the learning, leadership and organizational development section of OHRM explained the intention of UN Secretariat management and leadership development programmes is also to make staff at the P5 to D2 levels more aware of their role and potential as leaders.

Across the system there many outstanding examples of leadership and initiative exercised below the Executive head level, which have helped gain and retain credibility for the organization where leadership at a political level has been absent, waived or failed. One example is the Quixotic manner in which a staff member in the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), Francesc Vendrell, ensured over years against the political tide of the times that the UN Secretariat retained focus on East Timorese aspirations for self determination. Without that isolated act of leadership it is arguable whether the UN would have been able to take advantage as it did, when to the surprise of most observers in 1998/99 political circumstances became propitious after historic changes in Indonesia.

One of the most inspiring examples of leadership from below is that of Captain Mbaye Diagne, a Senegalese UN Military Observer in Kigali in 1994. When UN troops were withdrawn from Rwanda by the UN Security Council, Captain Mbaye and other UN Military Observers - along with the UN Force Commander General Dallaire and a small UN Ghanaian contingent - refused to evacuate. Captain Mbaye organized his colleagues, and - armed with only his radio - broke many UN rules to drive around Kigali during the genocide to extract civilians in danger,

and escort them to safety. What the international community had failed to do, he achieved through a combination of charm, coercion, courage and persistence. In mid 1994, while on one of these patrols, he was killed by a stray mortar shell. Captain Mbaye was credited by the BBC international journalist in Kigali at the time with saving hundreds of lives.

2.5 UN senior staff selection procedure

How the UN goes about choosing those it places in roles which demand high levels of leadership is illustrative of the priority placed by the organization on leadership. Kathleen Cravero pointed out that an increase in training on leadership will never be able to compensate for having chosen individuals whose leadership experience, ability or potential are not adequate. Training can not make up for poor selection.

The UN selection procedure for its most senior staff is the subject of much internal and external criticism. The UN Charter is explicit about the criteria for the appointment of all officials of the Secretariat. Article 101(3) demands that,

“the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff ... shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.”

As this section will illustrate *“the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity”* is not always the paramount consideration in senior level recruitment. The recruitment process is essentially political, with a large amount of decision making ceded in the case of a handful of some of the most important posts to the permanent five members of the Security Council (‘the P5’). While this system fosters a sense of ownership of certain key states in the UN, and has brought some strong people to the UN, it also puts the independence of the Secretariat in jeopardy, reduces the potential for strong leadership and demoralizes staff.

2.5.1. Criteria for outside recruitment

Few other organizations so consistently recruit for the top positions from the outside. This is potentially enriching for the UN as it in principle allows the UN to seek out the best leadership and management talent from across the globe. Moreover, well known individuals outside the organization bring political capital and connections with them. However, due to the selection criteria for that predominate for the most senior positions, outside recruitment can at times function less as an advantage than a handicap.

As Kofi Annan’s 2006 report “Investing in the United Nations” stressed, the size and multi-disciplinary nature of most UN endeavours make great demands at a senior level on management and leadership skills. The former Secretary-General pointed out that therefore: *“the UN needs to be able to recruit and retain leaders, managers and personnel capable of handling large, complex multidisciplinary*

*operations with increasingly high budgets.*¹²⁶ However, management and leadership skills are not consistently given prominence in recruitment and advancement, and the experience and skills of the most senior staff vary enormously in this respect.

The dominant selection criteria in the most senior UN appointments are political and geographic. Criteria can predominate that are not central to the particular demands of the job, or needs of the organization or department concerned. Decisive criteria for the most senior posts include nationality, political connections, diplomatic ability and acceptability of the individual to the host or other member states. Knowledge of the relevant subject area, proven leadership and management skills, field experience, or experience in managing a diverse work force or familiarity with the UN Secretariat are not usually given sufficient, or in some cases, any consideration. Jan Beagle said:

“Until recently there was not much store placed in the selection process of a proven quality of leadership, that is the ability to have vision, to empower, to encourage and to support others....”

Candidates are not closely scrutinised. Compared with the vetting processes employed in other jurisdictions, for example for nominees to posts requiring Congressional approval in the United States, there is also little formal due diligence with regard to the background of the candidates.

In line with the assumption examined earlier that the powerless are best served through some deference to and accommodation of the powerful, in the weighing of the suitability of individuals for appointment or advancement to senior levels, the ability to work with those in authority and to be seen to be responsive to critical member state interests can carry more weight than a proven commitment to and solidarity with those in need.

Chesterman and other contributors to the book “Secretary or General” stress that in the selection of a Secretary-General, the process is political rather than professional, and the strongest candidate can be disqualified precisely because they are strong. As Brian Urquhart writes with characteristic candour and irony on this selection process:

*“Political differences dictate a search for a candidate who will not exert any troubling degree of leadership, commitment, originality, or independence.”*¹²⁷

The caution underlying this observation can also apply in the selection of other senior UN officials in areas where there is little consensus among member states and controversial political content, for example with appointments to political positions in the Middle East. This was put in stark language in recent article in the influential German magazine, Der Spiegel:

¹²⁶ paragraph 22

¹²⁷ Brian Urquhart, *A life in War and Peace*, page 223

“Many international organizations suffer from the fact that they are run by uninspiring bureaucrats. In most cases, this is the fault of the heads of state and government who prefer to elevate weak figures, who won't meddle too much, to these positions.The imbalance between standards and leadership is currently the most glaring at the United Nations.....These executives are the products of a proportionate way of thinking. Their selection is based on the principal of mediocrity, and they fail to live up to the possibilities their positions would offer. But realizing the potential of their positions seems to be exactly what the countries and national leaders that selected them don't want them to do.....Times of crisis require leaders of a different caliber.”¹²⁸

2.5.2 The candidate pool

For many senior posts, the favoured recruitment pool are politicians who are retiring or are not re-elected, and New York or Geneva based Ambassadors (who, at times, use their positions to lobby for UN appointments). Senior diplomats often bring considerable political, negotiation, communication and people skills but may not have extensive leadership experience or in many cases management experience over large, complex structures. Political leaders carry political weight and are often distinguished as national leaders, but they may more rarely have any prior professional experience supervising a diverse and multi-national work force or working in systems where authority and responsibility are not clearly aligned.

How individuals are chosen is not necessarily closely related to their experience and the demands of the position. Recruitment of a national can be used as means of gaining favour with the country concerned. In some cases it has been suggested that a main factor in the recruitment of a particular diplomat or former minister was the support they or their Government provided for a Secretary-General's election or re-election campaign. For other posts the selection is de facto delegated to member states or regions. The Secretary-General and General Assembly play token roles.

According to an unwritten rule, the Secretary-General cannot be from one of the P5 countries. Over the past ten years the situation has evolved so that P5 members have certain other posts earmarked for their nominees: France DPKO; the United States traditionally the USG for Management (recently swapped for DPA) as well UNICEF, WFP, and deputies in UNHCR and UNRWA; Russia the UN Office in Geneva (UNOG); the United Kingdom DPA or OCHA; China another high profile New York USG position, currently the USG for Economic and Social Affairs. Other senior positions are allocated to regions to 'balance' the pre-earmarked appointments.

Kofi Annan tried to reduce the exclusive privilege of individual states to appoint candidates to specific posts by insisting that the country concerned propose at least three candidates. This practice is no longer consistently followed. It is not

¹²⁸ From SPIEGEL online, 07/23/2009, www.spiegel.de/international/

necessarily easy for a Secretary-General to enforce: Boutros-Ghali in his biography “Unvanquished” dates his falling out with the US that prevented his re-election from the time he did not accept President Clinton’s preferred candidate (a male) to head UNICEF - insisting instead that they present a US woman.

2.5.3 Some of the consequences

As a result of the preference for external political nominees, internal talent is often passed over. Sergio Vieira de Mello - a senior career staff member with thirty years of wide-ranging field and headquarters experience - was told that he could not be considered for the three posts he most wanted because of his Brazilian nationality. In 1999, he could not remain as SRSG in Kosovo because he was not a European. In 2000, he could not be retained as a candidate for High Commissioner for Refugees because he was not from a donor country and in 2001 he was told he could not head the UN Office in Geneva because he was not a Russian. His nationality did favour him for other posts.

It has to be acknowledged that this selection system has led to the emergence of some strong UN leaders and there is nothing to suggest that nominees handpicked by individual member states are in general lesser leaders than those selected by the UN. There a number of examples of outstanding leaders joining the UN as nominees for earmarked positions, including, inter-alia, Jean-Marie Guehenno of France who headed DPKO from 2000 to 2008 and Jim Grant of the United States who headed UNICEF from 1980 until his death in 1995. (On the latter, President Carter said his nomination of Grant to this position was one of the best things he did as US President.)

That said, narrowing the spread of a recruitment net to a single person, a single nationality or region reduces the chances of finding the best possible candidates. Where individuals know they owe their appointment to Government efforts this can potentially undermine the independence of the Secretariat, reduce the potential for loyalty to the UN, and reduce the ability of the officials concerned – as they themselves were benefited in this regard - to resist inappropriate political pressure.

It also has a demoralizing effect on staff when they see highly capable leaders from within the system passed over for less capable external appointees. It also broadly diminishes faith in a merit and qualifications based recruitment and promotions system, which is consistently singled out by UN staff in surveys for criticism¹²⁹.

2.5.4 Poor guidance

Compounding the problems caused by a politicized recruitment process that

¹²⁹ According to the ICSC 2008 staff survey, which had 15,000 respondents from across the system, 70 per cent of staff do **not** believe the current recruiting system secures the highest standards of integrity and competence as foreseen in the UN Charter. Over 50 percent believed having connections with and gaining support from governments were key to getting promoted while only 15.6% believed that competence is a dominant factor in promotion.

pays inconsistent attention to leadership qualities, is the briefing and guidance for senior staff parachuted into the organisation. Often they do not know the system or are aware of it only from its inter-governmental processes. Despite this, prior briefing is minimal. As German politician and former SRSG Tom Koenigs told a group of prospective senior UN mission leaders: *“Don’t expect any preparation, because you won’t get it, you have to prepare yourself.”*¹³⁰

In recent years, a three day course has been run for senior peace mission staff, there is also an Resident Coordinator induction programme. There is now an initiative planned for a comprehensive induction programme for the most senior staff but traditionally they have received no general briefings beyond those prepared for them inside their respective departments/agencies. Traditionally they have also not been given any opportunity for professional training in management or leadership to compliment existing skills and experiences.

Moreover, as a number of those interviewed pointed out, the expectations placed on senior staff with regard to leadership and management are not adequately spelt out. As a result senior staff will often see their role first and foremost as political and representational.

Many senior UN officials come from very senior roles in their own national system and it is rare that their new superiors provide them with any direction except in very general terms, and they are seldom, if ever, faulted or corrected. They function with minimal supervision. Thus Jan Pronk – a former Minister – continued writing his personal internet blog as the SRSG in Sudan, even when its existence and contents became known to his superiors in New York. The blog eventually led to his expulsion by the Government of Sudan, to the lasting detriment of the UN Mission, which almost ten months to deploy a replacement. Publishing material drawn from UN service, or under the UN’s name, without prior UN clearance contravenes UN rules. In a mission of the profile of Sudan, this rule would have been enforced with any other staff. Another SRSG from a P5 country was able to terrorize his staff with relative impunity in West Africa. In New York all knew but would not confront him until scandal was unavoidable.

Where a form of accountability is enforced, it has tended to focus narrowly on financial issues. Aspects of financial probity of senior managers are increasingly scrutinized: all staff at the level of Director (D1/D2) and above are now required to file financial disclosures, and the Secretary-General has encouraged the most senior staff to publish theirs. (Some have criticized the current system for not being rigorous enough on requiring senior staff to disclose all financial ties with and benefits received from governments, in particular their own.)

Other aspects of leadership integrity are not subject to the same scrutiny. There is as yet little accountability with regard to the value and moral commitment of UN leaders. The question of how they behave towards staff, their impact on morale, their ability to formulate and gain support for a meaningful vision, how they pursue the values the organization stands for – in particular when it is politically difficult to do so – are not in the forefront. It these attributes, however

¹³⁰ In a lecture to a DPKO senior missions leader course, Vienna 5 May 2009

as described in the next chapter, that can make the difference between a senior staff UN member and a UN leader.

2.5.5 Changes

In 2000, the Brahimi report called for management talent and experience to be given equal priority in selection of peace mission leaders as political and geographic considerations, and there have been some steps to improve selection procedures for and accountability of senior officials in peace missions and beyond.

Many of the improved measures apply only to staff below the Assistant-Secretary-General level. An example is the three-day independent formal assessment centre process that potential UN Resident Coordinators are now required to go through. Positions above the D2 level are considered more political and can be subject to less rigorous, less structured or transparent formal selection processes.

Interview processes have been introduced for almost all senior level Secretariat appointments and reference checks are also now more routine. Senior posts are also more frequently advertised. DPKO has established a senior appointments unit which has introduced a process for the selection of senior staff at DPKO missions – it is however, not yet applied to DPA led missions. There is a consistent effort to consider multiple candidates including women. Due diligence on candidates for senior positions is however, still rudimentary; geographic earmarking can greatly restrict the candidate pool and the scope allowed for member state lobbying can influence results in a manner unrelated to suitability or competence.

Efforts to make selection processes for the most senior positions more structured and consistent have been paralleled by efforts to enhance accountability of senior officials. In 2007, to enhance accountability, the Secretary-General introduced 'compacts' for his senior managers. These are intended to spell out in a form accessible to staff what senior managers are expected to achieve.

While the idea is welcomed as a significant step towards more accountability for management, some feel their content focuses disproportionately on ensuring compliance with bureaucratic processes. They emphasize issues such as compliance with processes such as staff evaluations and obligatory staff training. In reality, the compacts are often drafted by junior staff on behalf of senior managers. A number of senior managers confessed to have barely read their own compacts. In an interview for this study, Louise Arbour referred to it as a "*bureaucratic perversion of a good idea.*"

While there are some promising developments, efforts are still inconsistent, and how much readiness there is to privilege professionalism over patronage and politics is unclear. More ambitious measures would be required to ensure the broadest possible net of qualified candidates who are both politically/geographically acceptable **and** have the leadership skills required for an organization of the size and complexity of the UN. While progress is being

made, the current approach in the eyes of many within and outside the system still falls short of what is required to do justice to the formidable responsibilities inherent in UN mandates, to live up to the legitimate expectations of UN beneficiaries and comply with the wording of article 101 (3) of the Charter:

“the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff ... shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.”

Recapitulation

In recruiting for the most senior positions, the UN does not consistently make leadership ability a decisive selection criteria. UN leadership occurs in a haphazard manner and the system depends significantly on leadership from staff below the political level. There is, however, increasing attention to leadership and greater recognition and understanding of its importance, driven mainly by human resource and staff development sections.

UN leaders often have to function with unclear or unrealistic mandates and little clarity on how to define success. At the same time UN leaders receive direct pressure to be responsive to member state and institutional interests. As many observed during their interviews for this study, in the UN you serve many masters and are judged on the basis of many national norms, not primarily on the basis of the principles of the UN Charter or your ability to advance international norms. Especially from a Headquarters viewpoint, moral aspects of the mandate and the notion of the disadvantaged and vulnerable as clients will seem remote and abstract. Changing focus or giving real meaning to the moral content of the UN's purpose – while essential to the credibility and authority of the institution - is seldom straightforward. Elaborate and outdated procedures and the UN culture - conservative, risk averse and discouraging of candid discourse - is also a hindrance to change oriented leadership. Staff attitudes towards transformational leadership are also mixed.

At the same time, those interviewed reaffirmed that there is much in the UN context that is conducive to the exercise of UN leadership. The UN (at least the part of it which is the focus of this study) works in fluid, equivocal crises situations which call out for leadership. The fluidity of the situations the UN is involved in inevitably provides opportunities as well as setbacks. The UN provides senior staff with the profile and high level access which facilitates the influencing process at the heart of leadership. While many UN staff are sceptical or afraid of change, many others are highly motivated and able and willing to support UN leaders who are working towards it.

Chapter Three: Best Practices

“UN leadership is the ability, despite the internal and external constraints, to create space for independent action” - Filippo Grandi

“Leaders (see) their primary responsibility as unleashing the talent of others.”
Warren Bennis in Antonakis et al, page 341

This chapter describes what makes for good leadership in a UN context. Building on the analysis in chapter one it looks specifically at how leadership manifests itself within the contextual challenges described in the chapter two. It examines the following questions:

- What is the specific content of good UN leadership? What is excellence in UN leadership about?
- How have effective leaders managed the dilemmas of UN leadership? And in particular how have they managed the tension between the promotion of values and the demands of political expediency?
- How do effective UN leaders create room for leadership?
- How have successful UN leaders cultivated and fostered followers?

To answer these questions, best practices are synthesized as they emerged from the interviews and from written descriptions of UN leaders. These are drawn from the best practices of a range of former UN leaders with particular focus on Louise Arbour, Sadako Ogata and Sergio Vieira de Mello. To exemplify certain aspects of UN leadership the analysis will also look more closely at the approach of two individuals, Dag Hammarskjöld and James Grant, who to many epitomized the ideal of UN leadership. Best practices of Kofi Annan are also highlighted.

The chapter is divided into four parts, each covering an indispensable aspect of UN leadership:

- The essence of UN leadership: Being ‘client’ oriented and practicing integrity - i.e. feeding and sustaining the moral authority of the institution (3.1);
- Being entrepreneurial - i.e. being aware of but not resigned to constraints and seeking and creating opportunities to overcome them (3.2);
- Communicating vision and purpose - i.e. bringing clarity where there is ambiguity, complexity and tension (3.3);
- Bringing others along and encouraging leadership across the organization (3.4).

These four aspects are mutually dependant and overlapping. The attributes that inform them and types of behaviour in which they are manifested are elucidated and illustrated under each heading below.

Leadership examples

Sadako Ogata

When Sadako Ogata took over UNHCR as High Commissioner in 1991, the institution was demoralized and weak: her predecessor, the charismatic Jan Stoltenberg, had left to become Norway's foreign minister after only ten months in office. Jean Pierre Hocké, the High Commissioner before him, had been compelled to resign amidst allegations of financial impropriety. The allegations had earned UNHCR notoriety in the press and designation as 'the scandal ridden agency'. They had also led to unprecedented degree of involvement in UNHCR's management by the Secretary-General and UNHCR's executive board. A year before her arrival, UNHCR had also experienced the first major budget shortfall in its long history.

When she left in 2000, UNHCR had enhanced its operational capacity and broadened the number of people it served. It had almost tripled in size, assisting not only refugees but large numbers of internally displaced persons and other war victims. It had become known by the public at large and developed in political influence. Morale had also changed: as one staff member remarked, "Ogata gave UNHCR back its pride."

Some feel Ogata stayed too long and grew cut off towards the end. A bid to make UNHCR the coordinator of the whole UN humanitarian system failed and left UNHCR with an image of arrogance and overreach.

Louise Arbour

When Louise Arbour took over OHCHR as High Commissioner in 2004, it was also demoralised and internally divided. After the departure of Mary Robinson in 2002, Sergio Vieira de Mello had been appointed High Commissioner but in May 2002, after only eight months on the job, he was sent on an extended mission to Iraq where he was killed on 19 August 2003. A painful 10 month period followed with an acting High Commissioner. The majority of staff were on insecure temporary contracts, and the organization - in the absence of any unifying vision - was pulled in many directions by external stakeholders and internal divisions.

When she left after the conclusion of her four year term in mid-2008, OHCHR had doubled in size and tripled in the number of staff deployed to the field. It had embraced the idea of focusing resources and efforts on the implementation of existing rights at the country level. It had grown in confidence in its field operations, and was producing an unprecedented number of public reports on human rights crises across the globe.

The vision Arbour launched was not consistently pursued and she left the organization much larger but not as much changed as she had wished. There were also unprecedented attempts by some Member States of the Human Rights Council to curtail the independence of the High Commissioner's Office that left it on the defensive as well as internally divided.

Sergio Vieira de Mello

Unlike Arbour or Ogata, Sergio Vieira de Mello was a career UN staff member. In his 34 year UN career, he never spent more than three years in the same position. In many of the posts he occupied his accomplishments were far reaching. For example, in the early Nineties in Cambodia as UNHCR's Special Envoy, he led a major refugee repatriation operation from expectations of failure to success. From 1997 to 1999 he established the new Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), a successor to the largely discredited Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Under his leadership it regained credibility and relevance with its operational and Secretariat partners. From 1999 to 2002, he was the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Transitional Administrator in East Timor. The UN was very poorly equipped to take on the enormous task it was endowed with in but he quickly won the confidence of the Timorese and managed to engineer a relatively short transition for the country to full independence, while laying the groundwork for economic sustainability.

Vieira de Mello never prioritized focus on organizational change, nor stayed long enough in one position to be able to see it through. His pragmatism, his attentiveness to major stakeholder and power interests could predominate over considerations of principle.

3.1 The foundation: UN norms and principles

What is at the essence of UN leadership? What is it that distinguishes UN leadership from leadership in the private sector, in Government or in an NGO?

Most of those interviewed see the uniqueness of the UN in the Charter based norms and principles it represents and in the interface between these and the political world that surrounds it and intrudes within it. UN norms and principles are universal as they stem from the UN Charter and international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN's organizational values are derived from the norms and principles upon which it is founded. Without this unique foundation, some of those interviewed suggested the UN becomes a simple bureaucracy and grows irrelevant. Jan Beagle said,

“the most important asset we have in the UN is our moral reputation – leaders must symbolize those values – values are the major reason to partner with the UN.”

Upholding and reaffirming organizational values, as indicated in chapter one is a key, generic leadership function. Values are important not only for the external credibility of the organization but also as a source of motivation for staff. Nader Mousavizadeh, a former speechwriter and advisor to Kofi Annan, suggested: *“working for values makes you feel you are bigger than your job”*. The upholding of UN norms and principles by those who would lead is thus critically important both to sustain the only real leverage the organization has, its moral authority, and to bring a sense of cohesion to a diverse workforce.

3.1.1 Hammarskjold's ideal of international service and concept of integrity

Dag Hammarskjold, UN Secretary-General from 1953-1961, elaborated the meaning of UN leadership with reference to organizational values, norms and principles in more depth than any other senior UN leader. He is frequently cited as point of reference.

At the essence of Hammarskjold's vision of UN leadership was his ideal of international service and his concept of integrity. Hammarskjold's vision of international service underpinning the work of the UN was set out in a 1955 commencement address at John Hopkins University and in other speeches. In the speech at John Hopkins he grounded the necessity of international service in the environment of modern times. He spoke of unparalleled, cross-border *“dangers of own making”* that have shrunk the globe and brought the human family together. To withstand these threats, service to community or national interests, while still important, was no longer sufficient. International service had become an *“obligation”*.

Independence and loyalty to the UN Charter

What did international service mean to Hammarskjold? As elaborated in the 1955 speech and elsewhere, it is based on four core values: loyalty to the principles of the Charter, independence from any national or regional view, courage, and integrity.

UN staff, he told the fifth committee, “*should have only one loyalty in the performance of their duties, and that is to the UN*”¹³¹. Loyalty to the UN meant a commitment to the values set out in the Charter and international law that had to predominate over any other considerations, in particular national loyalties.

He considered and explicitly dismissed the notion that international service requires an attitude of unbending neutrality, moral relativism and passivity in the face of opposing ideologies and worldviews. International service implied activism on behalf of the principles set out in the Charter. He told the Security Council:

*“The principles of the Charter are, by far, greater than the Organization in which they are embodied, and the aims which they are to safeguard are holier than the policies of any single nation or people. As a servant of the Organization, the Secretary-General has the duty to maintain his usefulness by avoiding public stands on conflicts between Member Nations unless and until such an action might help to resolve the conflict. However, the discretion and impartiality required of the Secretary-General may not degenerate into a policy of expedience. He must also be a servant of the principles of the Charter, and its aims must ultimately determine what for him is right and wrong. For that he must stand. ”*¹³²

In another speech at Oxford University in May 1961, a few months before his death in a plane crash in Zambia, he explained that values and “*principles of the Charter are, moreover, supplemented by the body of legal doctrine and precepts that have been accepted by states generally, and particularly as manifested in the resolutions of the United Nations organs.*” These provide the guidance for the Secretary-General and essential reference point for all staff in the pursuit of their duties.

Integrity

Loyalty to the ideals of the Charter and international law was held by Hammarskjöld as a higher value than neutrality. As he pointed out in the 1961 Oxford speech,

*“in the last analysis, this is a question of integrity, and if integrity in the sense of respect for law and respect for truth were to drive (the Secretary-General) in to positions of conflict with this or that interest, then that conflict is a sign of his neutrality and not of his failure to observe neutrality – then it is in line not in conflict, with his duties as an international civil servant.”*¹³³.

¹³¹ Quoted in Urquhart, Hammarskjöld, page 523

¹³² Security Council Official Records, Eleventh Year, 751st Meeting, October 31, 1956

¹³³ From the lecture delivered at Oxford on May 30, 1961 – quoted in Markings, page XiX

He also frequently stressed the value of integrity as the indispensable leadership characteristic. He concluded his 1955 John Hopkins commencement with the words:

“Those who are called upon to be teachers or leaders may profit from intelligence but can only justify their position by integrity.”

It is important to note that integrity was understood by Hammarskjold in a much broader sense than the narrow definition with which it tends to be predominantly understood in the UN today. Integrity did not mean only refraining from financial or other professional or personal wrong doing in one’s conduct. It was an active quality, a proven readiness to uphold international law and speak the truth even where – or especially where - it is uncomfortable and personally disadvantageous to do so.

Courage

Integrity in the manner in which Hammarskjold spoke of it requires courage. In his John Hopkins speech he described three aspects of courage as critical to international service: The first is *“courage to ourselves”*, the courage required to be true to one’s own principles and convictions. The second aspect is the courage required to freely admit mistakes, the courage to show humility. The third aspect is the courage required *“to defend what is your conviction even when you are facing the threats of powerful opponents.”*

Hammarskjold demonstrated this type of courage in responding to a verbal onslaught against him from Soviet President Khrushchev in the General Assembly on 3 October 1960. Khrushchev called upon him to resign, and Hammarskjold insisted - in words that elicited a rare standing ovation - that he would stay on as long as other, less powerful member states wished him to do so. He noted his responsibility was to all Member States and to the Organization as a whole:

“It is not the Soviet Union or, indeed, any other big powers who need the United Nations for their protection; it is all the others. In this sense the Organization is first of all their Organization, and I deeply believe in the wisdom with which they will be able to use it and guide it. I shall remain in my post during the term of my office as a servant of the Organization in the interests of all those other nations, as long as they wish me to do so. In this context the representative of the Soviet Union spoke of courage. It is very easy to resign; it is not so easy to stay on. It is very easy to bow to the wish of a big power. It is another matter to resist. As is well known to all members of this Assembly, I have done so before on many occasions and in many directions. If it is the wish of those nations who see in the Organization their best protection in the present world, I shall now do so again.”

3.1.2 Managing between norms and principles and political interests

As highlighted in the previous chapter, in the daily work of the UN there is much pressure to compromise or disregard UN values. How have effective UN leaders managed this pressure? Some principles and approaches informing the practice of those who have successfully upheld UN values in contrary circumstances are the following:

A. Advocacy for principles confers an advantage

An attitude of excessive deference to powerful state interests can induce passivity, lead to bias and missed opportunities. The prerogative to represent the values and principles enshrined in the UN Charter and international law amidst political agendas is seldom easy but it also has unique advantages. Seeing values and principles as a strength of the UN rather than a constraint can create greater space for a UN voice. Hammarskjöld explained this as follows:

“The Secretary-General finds himself in a situation where he lacks ... the kind of weight which every government has... That is partly compensated for by one fact. Because he has no pressure group behind him, no territory and no parliament in the ordinary sense of the word, he can talk with much greater freedom, much greater frankness and much greater simplicity in approaching governments than any government representative can do.”¹³⁴

The potential advantage of being able to advocate for principle where there are divided political positions is also illustrated by an observation former Senior UN Official John Ruggie made about Annan:

“Kofi Annan... will ... pitch a principled answer rather than trying to compromise between conflicting interests. He will try for a principled answer that makes it damn hard for anybody to come out very strongly against him, because he isn't favouring one side over the other. He is promoting and favouring a principle for which the organization stands.”¹³⁵

B. Be politically wise without becoming politically tainted

In the complex situations in which the UN works, right and wrong are seldom clear. The complexity of the situations can easily induce a form of moral relativism where what is expeditious and meets predominant political interests is seen as most desirable. Such an attitude contributed to UNPROFOR's treating all sides as equally culpable in the former Yugoslavia and becoming ineffective and discredited. While being aware of the complexity, preserving a moral compass is essential.

This can mean being wary of the seductive lure of the promise of quick and easy political gains. What comes easily can often involve inappropriate compromises

¹³⁴ From a press conference 4 April 1957, quoted in *To speak for the world*, page 74

¹³⁵ Weiss et al, page 356

of principle. Some seeking quick political gains argued for example, that the UN should not support efforts to bring to justice leaders of one of Africa's most brutal militias, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) as this made negotiating peace in Northern Uganda more difficult. Such an approach raises many questions: Whose aspirations are being met through such an approach? Is the neglect of justice what the victims of the conflict want? Does neglecting justice contribute to the sustainability of peace? How can the UN credibly promote a global fight against impunity for grave human rights abuses and not uphold the same principle in individual peace processes?

The combination of being politically aware and politically sensitive without letting political criteria predominate against principle, is captured in Hammarskjöld's call to be "*politically celibate without being a political virgin.*" This is a balancing act and what John Hailey writes of NGO leaders, also applies to UN leaders:

*"Effective NGO leaders are able to balance a range of competing pressures from different stakeholders in ways that do not compromise their individual identity and values."*¹³⁶

Related to the ability to be aware of and responsive to political prerogatives without losing sight of fundamental values and principles is the ability to carefully weigh ends and means. In the UN there is a tendency to think teleologically: The pursuit of virtuous ends, can justify less virtuous means. Again effective UN leaders will show caution in this regard and recognize that cooperation to a good end, can at some point become collusion in less virtuous objective. This is highlighted in the following example:

In May 1994 in violation of a UN negotiated ceasefire and demilitarisation agreement which had brought a welcome pause to the relentless shelling of Sarajevo by the Bosnian Serbs, Yashusi Akashi the SRSG at that time, made a secret deal to allow the Serbs to transit tanks through what was meant to be a heavy weapons exclusion zone around the town. In return the Serbs released British soldiers held up at checkpoint on the way to Gorazde in Eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The planned deal led to severe criticism of Akashi and calls for his resignation. Implicit in this deal was the idea that UN freedom of access – a basic principle where UN troops are deployed – was negotiable. The deal also implied that a UN negotiated ceasefire and weapons exclusion could be broken by one of the sides with the complicity of the UN. Political expediency here with virtuous end - release of the detained British soldiers - but violating basic principles resulted in loss of UN credibility and public embarrassment.

¹³⁶ John Hailey and Rick James, *Trees die from the Top*, page 1

C. Be prepared to say no

An obvious, but surprisingly rarely used tool to prevent a compromise occurring that undermines basic principles or occurs at the cost of fundamental values and interests, is simply saying no. Simon Chesterman in the final chapter of his book on the constraints and potential of the role of the UN Secretary-General with the following observation:

“So what lessons may be learned from the preceding (chapters)...? Perhaps the most important lesson can be summed up in a single word: “No.” It is a word that needs to be spoken far more frequently in private and, when necessary, in public by the Secretary-General and his or her senior staff.”¹³⁷

Hammarskjöld was emphatic about the need to draw red lines, beyond which the UN would not step: *“I would rather see the office of the Secretary-General destroyed through strict adherence to the principle of independence and impartiality, than drift on the basis of compromise.”¹³⁸*

Vieira de Mello frequently spoke of the need for the UN to be better at saying no. He argued in particular in the case of peacekeeping for the UN to refuse mandates for which they were not adequately equipped or where the mandates themselves were not well matched with needs.

As much as Vieira de Mello argued the UN should say no more often, he himself was notoriously poor at saying it. He was eager to please and to find solutions, however much the odds were stacked against him. With others a professionally ingrained attitude of deference to governments and inter-governmental bodies can inhibit no saying.

Both Ogata and Arbour on a number of occasions said no in relation to a matter of principle and accepted the political fall out. In February 1993 in response to the many obstacles placed in the way of relief distribution by the Bosnian Serbs and the politicization of the relief operation by the Sarajevo city government, Ogata decided to suspend relief activities across Bosnia including the airlift. Ogata was perceived in New York to have overstepped her mandate and received a rebuke from the Secretary-General: Ogata later wrote: *“UNHCR was expected to carry on its relief work without ever questioning any threshold to politicization that I would refuse to cross.”¹³⁹*

In October 2007 Arbour visited Sri Lanka. The Government had declared void the ceasefire with the Tamil Tigers and having successfully retaken Tiger held areas in the East of the country were preparing for a major offensive in the north. There were many associated human rights abuses on all sides: child

¹³⁷ Simon Chesterman and Thomas M. Franck, *Resolving the contradictions of the office*, Chesterman (ed) page 239

¹³⁸ quoted in James Cockayne and David M. Malone, *Relations with the Security Council*, in Chesterman (ed) page 74

¹³⁹ Sadako Ogata, page 84

recruitments, disappearances, prevention of freedom of movement, harassment and killings of journalists and human rights defenders.

As a result of the scale of violations there were and many calls for an OHCHR country office. The Government pressured by donors agreed to a modestly expanded OHCHR presence but without any capacity to monitor and report publically on the violations occurring. Arbour declined to accept what the Government offered, as it was not – in her view – adequate to the demands of the situation. She was bitterly criticized by the Government but her principled stand won respect from others and allowed OHCHR to remain outspoken in its assessment of developments in Sri Lanka.

The UN Charter in article 100 provides for the independence of the UN Secretariat. In article seven the Charter confers on the UN Secretariat the status of principal organ of the UN on a par with the Security Council and the General Assembly. There is no legal impediment to saying no where it is deemed in conformity with the principles set out in the Charter, in the best interest of the organization and of its beneficiaries to do so.

D. Make the most of the public platform

Kofi Annan, when asked how he managed when he could not win over powerful states to an important cause, said reaching out directly to the public through NGOs was essential: *“Go to the people, use NGOs.”* He highlighted the example of the 1997 anti-personnel mine ban treaty, which succeeded despite powerful states being against it because of broad public and NGO support.

While the public expectations placed in the UN may be difficult to live up to, they provide UN representatives with a public platform, which can be used to gain political space for independent action. Being perceived as the advocate for principle and for what is right, confers on UN representatives space to speak out and appeal to a broader public. Arbour, Vieira de Mello and Ogata directly - or through the use of gifted spokespersons (such as Sylvana Foa, Ogata’s handpicked spokeswoman) - cultivated and gained a high public profile through skilled communication, which in turn endowed them with access and leverage.

Another example of where exploiting the platform the UN position provided to gain leverage was illustrated during Ian Martin’s early tenure in Nepal. Prior to being made SRSG of the new UN Mission in Nepal, he had led the OHCHR Nepal Office from 2005. In this capacity he had few resources and a mandate that focussed on public reporting of human rights abuses. His skilful use of the media allowed him to gain a strong public profile that gave him the authority and credibility to intervene successfully to reduce bloodshed during the popular protests in April 2006 that ended the rule of a King and brought a return to democracy.

Cultivating a public voice need not mean using it frequently. Ogata and Vieira de Mello both had high public profiles but rarely used public criticism. There are no rules for knowing when to remain silent, when to speak out, when to approach governments discreetly and when do so publicly. The first Secretary-General of the League of Nations, Sir Eric Drummond, as matter of principle did not speak to

the press at all. Hammarskjold, who cultivated the press and was popular with them, said that nine times out of ten more was to be gained by private negotiation than by public appeals or denouncement.

Hammarskjold also stressed however, that the UN has to operate in a glass house - *"it has to operate in daylight to an extent unknown in the diplomacy of the traditional type"*¹⁴⁰ - and therefore has to take an active role in shaping public opinion. The mass media has developed considerably since Hammarskjold's time: more than ever the UN is expected to be transparent and easily accessible. Now, according to Ahmad Fawzi - a senior staff member who has worked as a spokesperson for Boutros-Ghali, Annan and Brahimi among others - being seen as accessible to the media and informative is indispensable to the credibility and leverage of senior officials.

E. Combine modesty with persistence and determination

Two aspects to modesty are relevant here: Personal modesty and realism in terms of expectations. Personal modesty is of major advantage in upholding values and in conveying tough, principled messages. U Thant, UN Secretary-General from 1961 to 1971, was famous for such humility. He rarely responded to criticism and avoided protocol when travelling. According to Walter Dorn - an academic and former UN staff member who has written on him¹⁴¹ - U Thant's integrity and personal humility allowed him to speak out much more forcefully for UN principles than would have been possible had he been a less modest person:

*"Thant did not receive a strong rebuff from nations for his criticisms... His sense of morality gave power to his words, but they were spoken with great humility respect, and sensitivity."*¹⁴²

Irene Khan - the Special Assistant to Ogata and then from 2001 to 2009 Secretary-General of Amnesty International - noted that much of the UN's work is about being able to tell Governments what they do not want to hear. Vieira de Mello was particularly proficient at conveying difficult messages in such a way that they were well received. He treated all with the utmost respect even or especially when delivering the most unpalatable messages. He was also an exceptional listener and demonstrated appreciation for the position of others by repeating it often more eloquently than they themselves had phrased it. He rarely contradicted any one directly.

The lengths he went to show interest and understanding of others allowed him to have his difficult words heard and given weight in a manner that would not have been possible otherwise. By implicitly distinguishing between the person who was always worthy of respect and the position under discussion, which could be the subject of disagreement, he also made it easier for his interlocutors to change position on issues without losing face.

¹⁴⁰ from *To speak for the world*, pages 95 and 104.

¹⁴¹ A Walter Dorn, *U Thant* in Kent J. Kille (editor), page 147

¹⁴² *Ibid*, page 170

Modesty in terms of realism refers to an ability to relativise one's ideals without abandoning them. This means recognizing that the promotion of values is a difficult and long-term task that it is unlikely to yield the satisfaction of quick and easy results. This is illustrated in the following observation from Brian Urquhart's autobiography:

"I had flung myself in to the United Nations after the war with a highly romanticized idea about what an international civil servant might be able to achieve in a world of sovereign states and of virtually unbridled nationalism. As a result I often ended up angry, bruised and resentful through assuming what ought to be done could be done...."¹⁴³

Reason, justice and compassion are small cards to play in the world of politics, whether international, national or tribal, but someone has to go on playing them. If you hold on to your belief in reason and compassion despite all political manoeuvring, your efforts may in the end produce results. A determined effort to do what seems objectively right may in the end produce results."

As indicated by Urquhart there can be a tendency among UN staff to become disillusioned after the reality of the way the organization works in practice shatters the ideals that motivated them to join. The alternative to becoming negative or cynical is to relativise one's ideals and rather than lamenting what can't be changed, to focus on what can be. The concept of identifying a sphere of influence by focussing one's efforts on what one is in a position to change, is a recurrent theme in UN leadership training.

Urquhart's observation also highlights the need for a quieter but no less determined approach to the promotion of UN ideals. Arbour demonstrated on a number of occasions exceptional determination in promoting an issue of principle against the odds. Often through persistence results were eventually forthcoming.

When she joined the ICTY there were many low level suspects who had been indicted but very few had been arrested. Those with the means to undertake arrests, like NATO and its member states, were very reluctant to do so because of the risks entailed. The lack of arrests was damaging the credibility of the tribunal - the first attempt at international justice since the Nuremberg trials. Arbour designed a carefully considered strategy both to make arrests happen and to bring much higher profile suspects to court.

F. Don't distrust moral feeling

Earlier, it was argued that while much militates against the representation of values, norms and principles, to hold firm to them is both rational and necessary for UN leaders to bring added value and to achieve credibility. The motivating

¹⁴³ Urquhart, *A life in Peace and War*, page 196

factor behind moral advocacy is however, often much less rational calculation than gut reaction.

Asked what motivated her to take rapid and decisive action, Ogata – who was never known for any show of temper - said simply: *“People in distress upset me. When I get angry I decide fast and make things move.”* The promotion of principle is often less a matter of conscious strategizing than a visceral reaction to suffering. This was phrased by Samantha Power in an article on General Dallaire:

“The only way risky action is ever taken on behalf of a mere principle is when moral feeling – a hugely discredited quality in military and political life –overpowers reasoned self-interest.”¹⁴⁴

Ogata, Arbour and Vieira de Mello were all moved to action by exposure to the suffering of others. Each in their own way sustained their motivation by ensuring they were regularly connected with those whom their respective departments were meant to help. Sensitivity to the suffering of others, a gut reaction to injustice, and the capacity for moral outrage are crucial qualities to sustain motivation and to lend integrity to the passion behind a value based vision. It allows staff to identify with their leaders and lays the basis for the exercise of the influence which is at the essence of leadership.

3.2 Entrepreneurial leadership

If the first demand on UN leaders is to uphold UN values and norms and to practice integrity in the manner Hammarskjold described it, the second is to be entrepreneurial in order to gain and maintain space for independent action.

In chapter one, the importance of understanding context was stressed. The basis for activism has to be a thorough awareness of the constraints imposed by the context and its complexities.

The exercise of leadership consists of gaining awareness of the limitations, the contradictions and the unknowns, and then setting out to carry the organization beyond them. UN leaders should be aware of but not resigned to the constraints but find a means of creating space for independent action.

Creating this space, as James Traub wrote with reference to former Secretary-General Kofi Annan *“is almost wholly a matter of entrepreneurship.”¹⁴⁵* It requires an active, entrepreneurial attitude. According to Traub, Annan, was an *“entrepreneur of political space par excellence.”¹⁴⁶* Likewise Ogata, Vieira de Mello and Arbour each approached their UN positions asking themselves what more they could make of them. They were each quite different and yet their entrepreneurial approaches had certain similarities.

¹⁴⁴ *A hero of our time*, NY Review of books, Volume 51, Number18, November 18 2004

¹⁴⁵ James Traub, *The Secretary-General’s political space*, in Chesterman (ed), page 185

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, page 191

What are the components that make for an effective entrepreneurial mindset in the UN? Some of the qualities that emerge from the interviews and reading are political insight, knowledge, ambition and realism, a disinclination to accept the status quo, a judicious readiness to take risks and a sense of opportunity and timing. Courage and vision are other critical qualities. These will now be looked at in turn.

3.2.1 Knowledge, Political awareness and insight

According to Irene Khan *"leaders start by looking out."* Arbour, Vieira de Mello and Ogata were avid followers of the news, of global development and were driven by a consuming interest in international peace and security. They were persuaded that to make any real impact in dealing with injustice and human suffering, you need to engage at the highest political levels and understand the centrality of politics.

Ogata felt well equipped to reorient UNHCR operations in the early Nineties because she was an academic and political scientist, which gave her an understanding of the broader context in which it had to operate. Ogata's vision was heavily influenced by a reading of what the end of the Cold War meant in terms of humanitarian threats and opportunities and she approached her job as student of history, of political affairs and of bureaucracies. In all three cases, what they did within their respective organization was heavily influenced by a detailed knowledge of external events and trends.

Effective UN leaders also learn a lot about the subject matter with which they are dealing, this lends to their authority and credibility as well as to their ability to see opportunities. Vieira de Mello was well knowing his briefs in great detail. His staff were often take aback with his easy command of names and dates. Arbour also had a strong academic background and was renowned to be a voracious reader of all material related to her meetings and country visits.

As indicated in chapter one, a type of knowledge that is as important but less tangible, and more intuitive, is knowledge of how power is being exercised under the surface within and around the organization. Annan is particularly renowned for his sensitivity in this respect, for his ability, in the words of Michael Moller - a UN veteran and Annan's Deputy Chef de Cabinet - *"to read the political tea leaves"*. Martin Griffiths observed Annan closely during the 2008 negotiations that ended the post-election bloodshed in Kenya and wrote of him as *"the master of intuitive appreciation and insight."*¹⁴⁷

3.2.2 A sense of timing and opportunity

Linked to political insight is a quality of political agility, which is made up of a sense of timing, an ability to know when to act and when to refrain from action, to know when to seize opportunities or leave them to mature further. In the words of Filippo Grandi - currently Commissioner General of UNRWA, and someone who has had exercised leadership in most of the major and most

¹⁴⁷ hd Interview, *The Prisoner of Peace* page 18

challenging UN field operations over the past three decades - to pursue opportunities, to create space for independent action, you have to be both *"cautious and bold."* Timing is about knowing when to be cautious and when bold. In Annan's view this is a question of *"instinct, experience and judgement."*

In April 1991 in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, when she was barely two months in office, Ogata decided - against the advice of a number of her senior staff - that UNHCR should assist fleeing Kurds inside Iraq rather than simply protest against Turkey for not letting them cross the border. This was not a cautious decision, it was controversial and far-reaching. Those against it argued that UNHCR was effectively undermining the refugee conventions it was established to uphold by providing an alternative to asylum in assisting those feeling within their country. It was far reaching because it shifted the focus of UN operations to assisting people *before* they became refugees and opened the way for UNHCR's largest, most dangerous and highest profile operation ever that was to follow 12 months later in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

An ability to know when to seize an opportunity and act is as important as the ability to know when not to act. Speaking of crises in general, and in the context of the 2008 Kenya conflict, Annan said,

*"one of the most dangerous situations you can get yourself in is of 'wanting to do something'... Most people feel that when you are in a difficult situation you have to 'do something'. It doesn't occur to them that sometimes the best thing to do is just to sit."*¹⁴⁸

A sense of timing is of little value unless one is also blessed with opportunities. The context, as indicated in chapter one can be critical to calling forth leaders. Ogata as the title of her autobiography - *The Turbulent Decade* - suggests, led UNHCR at a time that was particularly demanding but also provided exceptional opportunities for humanitarian leadership. In the first few years of her leadership two of the largest humanitarian crisis of the century unfolded as a result of the wars in former Yugoslavia and the genocide and civil war in Rwanda. Numerous other crises such as the 1991 Gulf war or the 1992 Horn of Africa crisis also gained international profile.

On a smaller scale circumstance also assisted Arbour. Annan's 1995 reform agenda provided the backdrop for her to launch a new vision of OHCHR. Without that opportunity the change she promoted and the growth she brought to OHCHR would not have been possible. The coincidence of propitious context and canny leader are crucial. For this reason Gardner has describes leadership as *"great opportunities, greatly met."*¹⁴⁹

3.2.3 Realism, rebellion and risk taking

The agility to be at times cautious and at times bold is related to a combination in outlook of realism and rebellion. Many of those interviewed pointed to these two seemingly contradictory elements of effective UN leadership: realism or

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, page 11

¹⁴⁹ Gardner, page

pragmatism on the one hand, and what many termed being a ‘rebel’ on the other - an inclination to reject the status quo and seek change and innovation. In this approach, reality is recognized and taken for what it is, but not seen as unalterable. As described in chapter one, in relation to transformational leaders, realism goes hand in hand with the desire to bring about change and a readiness to take risks to that end.

The UN's limits

Realism in the first place means recognizing what the UN can and can not do, acknowledgment that its purpose is not so much to bring about utopian change as it is to alleviate and prevent large scale suffering. It is the realism implicit in Hammarskjold's saying that the UN as an organization was

*“not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell.”*¹⁵⁰

Knowing what is feasible

Another aspect of realism commented upon by many of those interviewed is having a sense of what is feasible, of what within existing and prospective constraints is possible, knowing in the words of a number of those interviewed *“what the political traffic will bear”*. Annan, for example chose not to intervene politically around the time of NATO air strikes in Kosovo in Spring 1999, because he knew that any political intervention at that stage was doomed to failure.

Realism in this sense means determining whether and how to intervene less on the basis of what in the abstract may be desirable and more in terms of what in actual fact is likely to be the impact and outcome. It implies putting more emphasis on what is feasible than what is desirable and calibrating action on the basis of potential for tangible impact.

The tension between what is desirable and what is feasible can be particularly acute in the field of promoting human rights: There are many who will always advise the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to speak out in reaction to violations regardless of consequences. But as Arbour pointed out: *“You have to promote values but also seek results, not just speak up for self advancement... you also have to avoid pyrrhic victories.”* A pyrrhic victory could mean getting your criticism heard only to then lose influence over those you are criticizing.

Annan and Arbour both also stressed that there are circumstances where principles have to be upheld even if they are unlikely to be heard. Annan said this was like *“sowing a seed,”* even if one's own efforts were to fail, speaking out could lay the ground for more success in the future.

In early 2007, for example, Louise Arbour intervened publicly, and through the submission of a third party *Amicus Curiae* brief, to say that the trials of Saddam Hussein and his associates had not met international fair trial guarantees. While the chances of stopping the executions were negligible, this endeavour

¹⁵⁰ quoted in Urquhart, *Hammarskjold*, page 48

vindicated her independence for many and drew attention to the fundamental principle of a fair trial for all, including for dictators.

Pushing the limits

Realism that is not combined with risk taking can easily lead to excessive caution and paralysis. In the words of Arbour *“you have to work with the feasible, but that does not mean that you take the feasible as a given. You have to push the feasible to its limits.”* Realism need not imply fatalism or resignation. In Arbour’s view it has to go hand in hand with desire to test and to push the limits of what is possible. This means exploiting openings, taking advantage of ambiguity, taking risks and being prepared at times to fail.

Ogata in 1991 in Iraq and subsequently in former Yugoslavia took risks. Vieira de Mello also took risks: In Cambodia in 1992 he overturned a carefully planned programme and urged voluntary repatriation of refugees with cash hand outs to areas many considered too dangerous. Both - thanks to good judgement and good luck - succeeded in these instances, and this greatly amplified their space for further action. A simple accepting of the constraints would not have allowed reality to be changed in the same way.

Realism combined with a readiness to take risks can paradoxically prove more effective than ungrounded idealism in bringing about change and in transforming reality. Ogata when she joined UNHCR had the impression of it as an organization *“with a noble cause but somehow aloof from reality.”*¹⁵¹ Arbour has said she felt the same about OHCHR. Bringing the organizations closer to reality, also brought them a little closer to fulfilling what they had been established to do.

3.2.4 Courage

To be entrepreneurial and disposed to take risks requires courage. Courage was highlighted as a generic leadership quality in chapter one but in the UN it is seldom explicitly valued. Its possession in significant quantities however, distinguishes effective UN leaders at every level of the organization.

There are many aspects to courage. Physical courage – a readiness to expose oneself to physical danger – is something that Arbour, Vieira de Mello and Ogata all shared – Vieira de Mello to a rare and exceptional degree.

Another type of courage that has more difficulty surviving elevation to the highest levels of the organization, is moral courage or the courage of one’s convictions. This is the courage related to Hammarskjold’s concept of integrity. It is what it takes to do what is right while knowing that the consequences will include censure or sanction or risk to career advancement. It is the courage required to take courses of action that are unlikely to prove popular with major stakeholders; to take major, substantive risks and to speak up and at times out, even where the predictable consequences will undoubtedly be personally damaging.

¹⁵¹ Sadako Ogata, page 347

This form of courage can be manifested in many ways. A number of instances are iconic and represent high points of the organization: Hammarskjold's stand against Soviet calls for his resignation; Annan's 1998 trip to Iraq - against US advice - to make a last minute pitch for peace; the bravery of Dallaire and West African UN troops and military observers who remained in 1994 in Rwanda during the genocide, when the mission was effectively abandoned by the UN Security Council and UN headquarters.

There are lesser-known examples from across the organization from staff at every level and where it has been at its most vibrant, the organization has encouraged such acts. As a rule, especially in politically delicate circumstances the organization tends to privilege caution over courage, in particular where major powers are involved. Caution tends to be equated with wisdom while courage can be seen as recklessness.

3.2.5 Optimism and other requirements

As indicated above, a characteristic of an entrepreneurial attitude towards UN leadership is not to give way to a culture of resignation and complaint that is often prevalent. The ability to withstand often well-justified negativity comes from optimism, confidence in one's ability to influence things for the better, a generic leadership quality also highlighted in chapter one.

Effective UN leaders see the need to always encourage others and not be weighed down by situations that are seemingly hopeless. Karen Abu-Zayd - a former Chef de Cabinet of Ogata, and leader of UNRWA until 2009 - elaborated on this attitude in explaining how she kept staff motivated during the Israeli siege of Gaza and its operation 'Cast Lead' of December 2008:

"You have to be positive yourself, you have to make staff who are not on the front line also feel they are part of something. Make all feel proud and remind them of what difference they are making."

Charisma

Related to optimism is the quality of charisma, which was mentioned in chapter one in the context of transformational leadership. It is the hallmark in different forms of many effective UN leaders. Annan and Vieira de Mello are frequently cited as examples of charismatic UN leaders. The effect of their charisma was that people wished to see them succeed and went out of their way to assist them.

Charisma is often portrayed as an intangible, in-born quality. Others have argued that it can be broken down into specific types of behaviour and learned. In the case of Vieira de Mello it was related to his attentiveness to individuals, his handwritten thank you notes, his memory for first names, his cheerfulness and the personal interest he demonstrated towards his interlocutors, his tendency to praise and encourage. It was also related to his appealing to basic UN values in his speeches, the optimism he communicated and the inspiration of his success.

An element of charisma is outreach. Both Annan and Vieira de Mello, in the words of Martin Griffiths, were "*compulsive networkers*". Both were constantly on

the phone exchanging ideas and information, garnering support and widening their influence.

Humility and self-confidence

In a 2006 UN Department of Public information film entitled 'Courage for Peace', the former head of UN peacekeeping Jean Marie Guehenno said that three qualities are needed to be an effective peace-keeper: Courage, humility and persistence. Humility, demonstrated by a tendency to show respect for other cultures and play down one's own importance, is a characteristic of exceptional UN leaders. Humility inspires trust and thus opens doors to opportunities that otherwise would not be forthcoming.

Lakhdar Brahimi - the former Algerian foreign minister, who served as Annan's Special Envoy in many of the most trying situations - is widely seen as one of the UN's most accomplished negotiators. According to staff who worked with him, prior to any meeting he would study his briefs closely and rarely if ever attended a meeting for which he was not fully prepared. And yet he would open many meetings apologizing for his ignorance and shortcomings and stressing that he counted on others present to guide him and help him reach an agreement.

In effective UN leaders, humility goes hand in hand in with *self-confidence*, another generic leadership attribute. None of the three leaders featured in this chapter showed much inclination to self-doubt or dwelt on their set backs and failures. Hammarskjöld said in this regard that the safest climber is he who never questions his ability to overcome all difficulties.

Self-confidence in turn allows for *decisiveness*, which is essential to move forward in a politicized and divided operational environment. Decisiveness, which is linked to courage and readiness to take risks, is a quality praised by a number of those interviewed in particular in relation to Ogata and Arbour.

Hard work, patience and tenacity

It is hard to think of an effective UN leader who was not hardworking. Arbour, Ogata and Vieira de Mello were willing to put in long hours, often left the office late and still almost always took work home. Hard work tends to go hand in hand with a determination and tenacity. Ahmad Fawzi highlighted Brahimi's ability to persevere against all odds: in the December 2001 Bonn negotiations on Afghanistan in which it was decided how the country would be governed in the aftermath of the Taliban, Brahimi would spend seven or eight hours at a stretch chairing a meeting without once getting up from his seat. His example of perseverance, in Fawzi's eyes, was crucial to help bringing about a result.

Tenacity is combined with *patience*. Many of those interviewed – including Kofi Annan - highlighted the need for patience as an indispensable leadership attribute in UN context. Coming from the private sector, Susana Malcorra, said the biggest challenge for her in adapting to a UN environment was managing her impatience.

A characteristic of effective leadership in the UN, is patience combined with determination and tenacity. Where patience occurs, as it can do, without the latter qualities, it simply makes for passivity and resignation.

Resilience

Because they take positions and promote change, entrepreneurial UN leaders can attract more internal and external criticism and come under more stress than less enterprising senior staff. Resilience built on self-confidence and integrity is essential. Graham Jones¹⁵² a sport psychologist lists the analogous components of resilience among high performing athletes:

“Mental toughness; an ability to reinvent themselves; cool under fire; masters of compartmentalization; inner focussed and self directed; rarely indulge in self flagellation but move on; stay focussed on what they can control; celebrate their victories.”

As highlighted in chapter one, resilience also stems also from the ability - however engaged in an issue or situation - to remain partially attached. This is also related to an ability to compartmentalize or as Vieira de Mello put it, to ‘black box’ certain issues.¹⁵³ Effective UN leaders inevitably tend to under react to stressful situations and have an ability to stay cool when others are inclined to panic.

Versatility and an ability to reinvent themselves

The demands on UN leaders are as varied as the stakeholders who convey them. Effective UN leaders tend to be versatile and an indication of this is the variety of jobs they have done and the manner in which they have reinvented themselves time and again.

Arbour was an academic, then a Canadian judge who became an international war crimes prosecutor. She led a UN department and now runs an NGO of political analysts. Vieira de Mello moved between UN entities and duty stations long before it became more common do so. Ogata went from being a senior mid-level diplomat and academic to running what at the time was the largest humanitarian agency in the world. They all reinvented themselves in different roles and demonstrated the versatility highlighted in chapter one as a generic leadership characteristic.

Prepared to lead from behind

As indicated above there is a much demand on senior UN staff to reconcile differing stakeholder positions. A strong, highly visible third party mediator can be unhelpful and a more discreet approach can be more productive. De Soto said of former Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar that his particular skill was to give others the impression that they were in the lead when in fact the direction they were taking was determined on the basis of his ideas and position. This allowed

¹⁵² *How the Best of the Best get Better and Better*, page 123ff

¹⁵³ See Samantha Power pages 98, 404

him to wield much more influence than if had he sought greater visibility for his own role.

The ability to lead peers relates to the growing importance of lateral leadership highlighted in the first chapter. In the UN internally and externally there are greater expectations placed on being able to work effectively with other components of the system. In a UN inter-agency context, an ability to let others stand at the front of the stage is essential to gaining unity of purpose.

An ability to lead the larger and more visible humanitarian agencies discreetly was essential for Vieira de Mello as UN Emergency Relief Coordinator. Claire Messina said of him in this role:

“He could lead from behind, did not have to be the prima donna, he was sufficiently self-assured to let others have the limelight.”

3.3 Vision and a sense of purpose

The third indispensable requirement to UN leadership is vision. The previous qualities highlighted – political awareness, a sense of timing, realism, risk taking, courage, optimism, tenacity, versatility and patience – will add up to little if they are not supported by and played out within a clear and compelling vision. They are qualities to be rallied in the pursuit of a purpose, a clearly articulated sense of direction. Arbour alluded to this when she suggested:

“Courage is a lot easier than clarity – a leader must first bring clarity about what to do, then courage falls in place.”

Vision was highlighted as a principal leadership function in chapter one. Here vision is examined in a UN context through the examples of Jim Grant’s impact on UNICEF and the practice of Arbour, Ogata and Vieira de Mello. This chapter identifies the elements that make for a successful vision in a UN context and looks at the relationship of vision to UN mandates.

In training courses senior UN staff tend to place vision - followed by integrity - at the top of the list of required leadership qualities. Claire Messina suggested: *“If you have to bring UN leadership down to one thing it’s about vision, the depth and breadth of vision.”*

Vision in the UN is of particular importance because there is so much that stands in its way. As illustrated in the previous chapter, UN leaders are pulled in many different directions and have to deal with situations riddled with ambiguity and contradictions. Moreover taking a firm position with clear sense of purpose – as a vision requires - is politically hazardous and can restrict room to manoeuvre. The tendency therefore can be to play it safe, avoid setting longer priorities and decide what to do according to day-to-day pressures and events as they arise.

3.3.1 The example of Jim Grant

James Grant was the UNICEF Executive Director from 1980 until his death in 1995. While some may disagree on the ultimate benefit of Grant's vision, no one would dispute the change it brought about inside UNICEF and the fact that it had a major impact.

To the annoyance of some senior UNICEF staff, Grant drew the elements of his vision largely from outside expertise¹⁵⁴. At the heart of this was a simple idea, which now seems obvious: most child deaths were unnecessary and child survival and disease rates could be radically altered through making immunization and oral rehydration's therapy (ORT) available to all children. UNICEF had to realign resources and focus all its efforts on this task.

When Grant launched the idea, many saw it as simplistic and over ambitious and he was referred to by some as the "*mad American*."¹⁵⁵ He progressively won his staff over and UNICEF's engagement contributed to a rise in global vaccination rates between 1982 and 1995 from twenty to eighty percent, which is credited with having saved tens of millions of lives.

His vision was simple and compelling and it allowed for the elaboration of straightforward programmatic goals. While some questioned his methods, nobody doubted the integrity of idealism. He relied heavily on using every possible occasion to repeat and elicit support for his vision. As his deputy Richard Jolly, wrote: "*Jim could be infuriating for his ability to repeat the message, over and over and over again.*"¹⁵⁶

The effectiveness of Grant's vision lay not only in the fact that it was simple, timely and appropriate but also in the fact that he rallied the whole organization behind it. UNICEF's impact on child welfare was possible not only because the Executive Director had a had a good idea, but as Sandra Haji-Ahmed pointed out, because this idea was understood, shared and promoted by every staff member from Grant's deputies in New York to UNICEF drivers across Africa.

3.3.2 Various approaches to vision of Ogata, Arbour and Vieira de Mello

Ogata sat for a number of years on the UNICEF board and recognizes Grant as a mentor. Long serving UNHCR staff said that Ogata was the first High Commissioner who had a clear coherent vision for the organization that was consistently communicated across the whole of the organization, mainly through the dissemination of her speeches.

Ogata's vision for UNHCR referred to the political events sweeping the globe in the aftermath of the Cold War. The upheavals consisted in the end to surrogate conflicts between the superpowers and the emergence of new internal conflicts often brought on by the end of authoritarian regimes. The changes placed

¹⁵⁴ Peter Adamson, *The mad American* in Richard Jolly (ed) page 20/21

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, page 19

¹⁵⁶ Richard Jolly, *The man behind the vision* in Richard Jolly (ed) page 60

unprecedented demands on the humanitarian system with the need to launch large-scale repatriation operations after peace agreements concurrently with responses to major new emergencies as a result of new wars. Also in the West xenophobia increased and with the end of the Cold War, asylum lost its ideological and political value. Focus shifted towards assisting victims *in situ* in their countries of origin.

In this context, Ogata's vision for UNHCR consisted in the promotion of three straightforward concepts, which reoccurred in many of her speeches. These were prevention, solutions and emergency response. Emergency response referred to the need to build up a dedicated emergency response capacity to respond to new and unforeseen needs. Solutions referred to the need to take advantage of political changes to seek solutions – usually refugee return – for long standing refugee problems and prevention, most controversially, referred to the need to take measures to reduce the potential for refugee movements, including in some circumstances by helping victims of war *in situ*, prior to flight.

While Ogata's vision was developed largely in her own executive office, Arbour initiated and directed an extraordinary, internal consultative process to arrive with what amounted to the first ever comprehensive, cross cutting vision for the work of OHCHR. She also drew on outside expertise. The exercise was linked to and took advantage of major UN reform exercises at the time, led by former Secretary-General Annan. Staff at different levels came together to formulate a Plan of Action (which despite its name was more of a vision statement than a plan of action). It brought together many priorities but the main emphasis was on shifting the focus of the organization away from the elaboration and interpretation of rights and more to the implementation of existing standards at the country level.

In the case of Vieira de Mello, it is more difficult in any of his leadership roles to point towards a set of elaborated ideas that constituted a formal vision. There were nevertheless key priorities he enunciated repeatedly and that together with the example he set and his more informal statements constituted the elements of a vision. As OCHA head for example, he promoted the idea of the organization being present in the field, able to rapidly react in emergencies and relevant to operational agencies. He also saw a principal purpose of the organization as representing humanitarian interest *vis-à-vis* political actors in the UN, and ensuring that humanitarian action was not used as a surrogate for attending to the political causes of humanitarian crises.

3.3.3 Features of an effective UN vision

What made some of these approaches more successful than others in transforming the organization concerned and achieving greater impact?

Shows the organization's contribution to the bigger picture

Ogata's vision was compelling because it made reference to the larger, global picture and where UNHCR fit within it. It was also compelling because it was forward looking, it posited UNHCR at the forefront of unfolding events and

because – like with Grant’s vision for UNICEF – it was about doing more for UNHCR beneficiaries. It greatly amplified the idea of who was a beneficiary to many in need who were not (or not yet) refugees.

Arbour’s vision was also linked to external developments, notably UN reform and a broader popular awareness about the discrepancy between a rich body of human rights which many Governments had committed to upholding on the one hand, and the poor record of their implementation on the other. Arbour’s vision was also driven by the idea of making a tangible difference to those whose rights were most threatened. It responded to a broadly shared external view that the office, focussed as it was on inter-governmental processes and support to expert groups, was out of touch with the reality of where violations were occurring and had a limited impact.

For a vision to take hold needs, persistence, time and repetition

For a number of reasons the degree to which the vision of Arbour however, took traction in OHCHR was more limited. Arbour compared the potential effect of the launching of her vision to the flipping of an iceberg – complete organizational transformation. This did not happen. There was internal and external opposition and after about a year of intense follow up, emphasis on the ‘Plan of Action’ diminished and efforts to remould the organization according to its recommendations were increasingly neglected.

Like Grant, Ogata made frequent use of repetition of the key ideas as a means of ensuring her vision was broadly known. In OHCHR, there was not the same constant repetition of key themes and a consistent and sustained realignment of the organizational resources that characterised the promotion of comparable visions in UNHCR under Ogata and UNICEF under Grant.

Moreover, and perhaps most crucially, whereas Grant remained at the helm of UNICEF for 15 years and Ogata led UNHCR for 10, Arbour left OHCHR after one four year term in office. To change the entrenched culture and habits of a UN bureaucracy can seldom occur rapidly. The ambitiousness of her vision could not be sustained without her drive.

Likewise with Vieira de Mello, due to the limited time he spent at any one post it is harder to demonstrate an organizational legacy for most of the positions he occupied. He focussed externally and did not dedicate much time to organizational change. Implementing Annan’s first set of reforms, he managed mainly through focussing its efforts and clever recruitment to make OCHA relevant in a way that its predecessor, the larger DHA, had never been. Through his example, he also made field service attractive to many UN New York Secretariat staff.

Compelling ideas, conveyed with integrity of passion, which stretch staff

All visions mentioned above provided focus for work that otherwise could have been dispersed and therefore less effective. Most were built on fairly simple

ideas that with the benefit of hindsight were self-evident. They were ambitious, value based, memorable and inspiring.

To inspire a vision needs to resonate with the aspirations of followers and be underpinned with personal commitment and a degree of enthusiasm. Those who represent the vision have to do so with persistence, credibility and conviction. There has to be congruence between the prepared and the spontaneous, between words and behaviour, there has to be what Filippo Grandi referred to as "*integrity of passion.*"

3.3.4 Vision and mandates

How does a vision relate to a mandate? In each of the above cases the visions adopted were built on or at least consistent with the respective organization's mandates. At the same time they gave new impetus, relevance and meaning to the mandate.

The potential tension between the wording of a mandate and a vision that relies more on underlying values is illustrated by the decision, referred to above, of Ogata in 1991 to assist fleeing Kurds inside Iraq. She was confronted with a dilemma: Should she deploy UNHCR assets in to northern Iraq to help displaced Kurds and thus tacitly support Turkey's decision not to open the border to them or should she stay out and encourage Turkey to open its borders? On a Saturday afternoon after being briefed in Geneva by her senior staff she made the decision. She argued on the basis of the humanitarian spirit underlying UNHCR's mandate, on the basis of pragmatism and what was in the best interest of the beneficiaries: If those in need of UNHCR assistance could not reach UNHCR but UNHCR could reach them, the organization should go to where they were.

Mandates should not stand in the way of upholding UN values

Where mandates - as has been the case in some peace missions - are too narrow, contradictory or illogical, a vision for the work of the respective mission that restricts itself to the narrow confines of the mandate or loses itself in its illogical wording, can be damaging especially if as consequence, legitimate expectations placed in the UN are disregarded and UN values downplayed. Making the principle of saving lives and reacting within all available means to prevent atrocities secondary to mandate restrictions brought the UN into disrepute in 1994 in Rwanda and during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

While there is often a tendency to blame inaction on bad mandates, there is sometimes an alternative as the following two contrasting examples illustrate: In 11 April 1994 in Rwanda, based on unfolding events and the restrictive UN mandate, evacuating UN troops abandoned the Don Bosco technical school in Kigali where 2,000 Tutsis had taken refuge. Militia who had been outside the compound making threats, entered as soon as the UN troops left and killed those within.

Five years later, in East Timor, after the announcement of the result of the UN organized popular consultation revealed that the majority of East Timorese voted for independence, militias against independence went on a murderous rampage. On the 5th of September 1999 in Dili, hundreds of people again took refuge in a UN controlled compound fleeing violent (but not genocidal) militia. Like UNAMIR in Rwanda, UNAMET had no protection mandate and unlike UNAMIR, no armed military personnel. The SRSG, Ian Martin and a group of his staff took quite a different approach from the UNAMIR officers at the Don Bosco school and pushed back pressure to evacuate until safe passage could be arranged for those who had come to the compound. As a result of this initiative, none of those in the compound were killed.

As one senior UN general put it, *“you can take mandates as a floor or a ceiling.”* Some contexts call for an understanding of the mandate that ‘all that is not prohibited is permissible’, other contexts for an attitude that ‘all that is not expressly permitted is prohibited’. You can use mandates to build on and do more – as Ogata and Ian Martin did - or understand them in the most restrictive sense possible. While caution often dictates the latter approach, in many crisis situations it can be inappropriate.

Annan said that when senior colleagues complained about the inadequacies of new mandates, he told them that they should see the contradictions and vague wording as an advantage rather than disadvantage. It left them space to give the mandate meaning in terms of the values of the organization.

3.3.5 Focus on and proximity to ‘we the peoples’

UN leaders such as Grant, Ogata, Arbour and Vieira de Mello attracted a following of staff who were not only willing to work much longer hours and in much more inhospitable environments than they would have done otherwise, but who were also willing to risk their lives. They did so because the leaders they worked under through their vision fostered a belief, a conviction that they were making a difference for those the UN is meant to serve.

This will not occur where a senior staff member is seen as aloof or distant from the UN’s intended clients. To be seen to be close to beneficiaries, field service or field missions are crucial. Vieira de Mello had credibility with many staff because of his distinguished record of field service. He was also known on a number of occasions to have gone out of his way to take personal initiatives to help individual victims he had encountered in his missions. Ogata and Arbour both spent large amounts of time travelling to the most difficult field locations – and clearly valued it. Both often returned recounting the stories of individual victims they had encountered. They used what they had seen to bring a sense of reality to the sometimes remote and narcissistic Headquarters perspective.

Margaret Anstee, the first woman SRSG, stated that in the UN a willingness to go to tough missions *“divides the men from boys... the women from the girls.”*¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Weiss et al, page 334/335

Travel to the field and interaction with UN clients is essential not only to gain respect among staff and credibility with other stakeholders, but also to ensure that vision is informed by a reality beyond the multilateral diplomatic and organizational politics of Geneva or New York.

3.4 Fostering followers and making room for other leaders

The fourth major requirement of UN leaders is to transform the staff under their supervision into a team where there is creativity and mutual support and where leadership is exercised at all levels. Most senior UN positions bring with them certain management responsibilities but they do not automatically endow the incumbents with substantive authority and influence over 'their' staff. While this is the case in other organizations with loose or diffuse command and control, the UN organizational culture and limited receptivity to leadership of some staff, can make this challenge particularly acute. The sort of authority and influence that can have a major impact and bring about change has to be gained. As Irene Khan suggested: *"Don't assume hierarchy gives power, you have to earn respect."*

There are many ways by which effective UN leaders have given substance to the authority of their roles and attracted followers. The approaches highlighted in the previous sections of this chapter, in particular communicating a compelling vision and the adherence to and promotion of UN principles, values and norms are crucial for credibility and to attract and inspire others. While a convincing demonstration of vision and values are perhaps most critical, there are other important attributes and behaviours demonstrated by effective UN leaders. These are described in what follows.

3.4.1 Understand the organizational culture and value staff

The starting point for leadership in the UN is understanding the organization, department or mission concerned and showing appreciation for those who work in it. UN staff can be sceptical towards outsiders who are parachuted in to senior positions, lack demonstrated commitment to the institution and are likely to move on in a few years. For those who come from inside, like Vieira de Mello or Annan, it can be easier. Their dedication to the UN is taken as a given.

A degree of scepticism towards outsiders can be made worse when they appear to come with negative preconceptions of what they will find, such as clichéd views of UN bureaucracy and staff. Some have only worked in a single national system and react with distrust and misgiving to what is different and unfamiliar. Incomprehension can result in hostility. Where unreflected criticism of the system is freely expressed, some longer serving staff can feel defensive and a barrier is created to mutual understanding. Unsympathetic preconceptions are not a good starting point to gain influence and induce change. As the Deputy High Commissioner of Human Rights, Kyung-wha Kang observed: *"Before you join, you receive many warnings ... but distrust only breeds distrust."* Annan made a similar point about the importance of listening to and trusting staff:

“Outsiders don’t always understand the limitations and rigidity of the system. They beat up on staff, only to find out subsequently, these are the only troops they have... It is like walking in to a situation, thinking you know better than the natives, it will get you into trouble.”

Gardner suggests that those who join a new organization *“should learn to find their way into an unfamiliar organizational culture, to honour that culture’s sensitivities, and to develop empathy for its values and assumptions.”*¹⁵⁸ A sympathetic understanding is a prerequisite for learning, which in turn is necessary to be able to lead. Starting with empathy does not preclude a critical attitude but insures such an attitude is well informed.

An approach of a newcomer which shows respect for the institution and values staff is illustrated in the following letter Arbour wrote in 2009 to her staff at the International Crisis Group prior to taking up office there:

“Dear colleagues,

In deference to the Board, I have delayed until now in telling you how delighted I am to be joining you as President and CEO effective July 21 of this year.

I have known many of you for some time, and I have known much of your work for quite a long time, but before I start sharing in any of the credit for it, I just wanted to tell you all how impressed I am by the product of your tremendous efforts.

I will do everything I can to support you, including through securing the financial backing without which we would fall short of realizing our legitimate ambitions as a cutting-edge field based organization.

I want to thank you for the generous welcome that you have extended to me and I look forward to some very exciting years ahead as we continue to secure our place as the pre-eminent organization not just as advocates, but as instruments of peace.

*With warmest regards to all, Louise”*¹⁵⁹

To lead people you have to like people

Openness and willingness to learn about the organization has to be paralleled by a predisposition to like those one will work with. Professor John Adair pointed out that to lead people, you have to like people and believe in them or at least in their potential. Where UN leaders have treated staff with barely disguised contempt, their ability to gain loyalty and influence is diminished. A former Secretary-General who was quoted in the New York Times as suggesting that *“the only way to run the Secretariat is by stealth and sudden violence”*¹⁶⁰ was, according to many staff and external UN observers, less successful than others in influencing the views and actions of his senior managers and implementing change.

Reach out

¹⁵⁸ Gardner, page 175

¹⁵⁹ Letter to ICG staff, June xx 2009

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Brian Urquhart, *The evolution of the Secretary-General*, in Chesterman (ed) page 27

According to Irene Khan, to lead staff it is essential to reach out and connect with them at all levels. She quoted the prominent Swedish industrialist Pehr Gyllenhammer who had advised her to not only connect with senior managers but “*to go to the factory floor*”. Ogata likewise reached out to staff at large. She was not naturally gregarious or easily approachable and so she did so through her statements and through social events on her field visits.

Be aware of your impact

To connect effectively with staff it is also essential to be aware of the potential impact of one’s conscious and unconscious gestures on the mood and opinion of staff. Senior staff don’t always realize how closely they are watched and the importance that can be lent to automatic and unconscious habits.

One those interviewed illustrated this point by contrasting the approach of two different Secretary-Generals at a meeting she had attended involving the same participants: One entered the room where the participants were waiting and only greeted the most important people at the table, approaching the men before the women and not addressing attendees by their name. The second greeted all in no particular order and the lesser in the hierarchy with the same warmth as those who were higher up. He made a point of explicitly greeting those sitting at the periphery and recalled the names of all those in the room he had met before. She pointed out that due to this entrance, almost regardless of what he had subsequently said, the latter individual commanded a more sympathetic hearing from those who attended the meeting than the former.

Be accessible

Many of those interviewed stressed the importance of being easily accessible to staff. Gerald Walzer - Ogata’s former deputy - suggested: “*the best supervisors leave their doors open.*” As leaders can easily grow isolated or cut off by their immediate staff, allowing and encouraging broad access is key to remaining aware of what is going on the organization at large.

Vieira de Mello always tried, often against the advice of those who were responsible for managing his overcharged schedule, to be accessible to junior staff. On the 21st of May 2003 on the busy eve of his departure to take up the position of SRSG in Iraq, he made a point of not cancelling a long planned meeting with OHCHR interns in Geneva, to express support for the work they were doing at OHCHR. “*They work here for free, they deserve my time*”¹⁶¹ he insisted.

Consult, especially downwards

The importance of listening skills and empathy for leading people is stressed in the generic literature and was reiterated by many of those interviewed. Most effective UN leaders make a point of consulting downwards and listening to those who will be impacted by a decision. They are not shy to seek out the

¹⁶¹ Samantha Power, page 387

opinion of their inferiors. Arbour frequently called in junior staff to test ideas and would readily modify her own opinion after hearing them.

Vieira de Mello was generally seen as exceptional in his ability to listen and take other viewpoints into account. He made a point of attributing ideas to those who had first had them rather than assuming them as his own. Where others had contrary views he elegantly acknowledged this and left people feeling important and appreciated even when they had been contradicted. His consistent readiness to acknowledge the positions of others, even where he did not agree with them, allowed him to win over many.

Give credit and take blame

Effective UN leaders give credit to and praise the contribution of others but also readily take criticism including on behalf of their subordinates. Tony Banbury, a former Clinton administration official and now the number two in the UN Department of Field Support, suggested, *“to build a following, the key is giving credit and taking blame. Too many people in the UN manage up and kick down.”*

On the advice of staff, in early 2008 a few months before leaving office, Arbour issued a statement praising the recently ratified Arab Human Rights Charter. This proved highly ill advised as the Charter included the juxtaposition of Zionism and racism and had various other flaws. After her statement, Arbour was mercilessly criticized by many Jewish groups, some of whom urged her to fire whoever was responsible. When she issued an addendum highlighting weaknesses in the Charter she was in turn accused by many ambassadors from Islamic countries of lacking impartiality. She was upset by the tide of criticism from both sides especially as it cast a shadow over her last months in office but she rationalised it with the following words to one of the main people responsible for the mistake: *“I have received and receive much undeserved credit for things others have done, it is balanced out a little if sometimes I receive some undeserved criticism.”*

Create positive expectations

An additional characteristic in the approach to staff of more effective UN leaders is to manage more through breeding positive expectations than through censure. Ruggie said of Annan in this respect: *“There are a variety of ways in which a leaders leads. Kofi Annan rules by positive expectations, so everybody wants to do the right thing because you couldn’t possibly want to disappoint him.”*¹⁶² Vieira de Mello similarly created a positive sense of obligation by going out his way to help others and by using praise and encouragement. A positive approach to staff helps to make others feel comfortable following and it opens the way for staff to become allies in a common purpose rather than simply subordinates.

¹⁶² Weiss et al, page 356.

3.4.2 Getting diverse people to work together

Claire Messina stressed *“leadership in the UN is about building alliances, being able to lead in non-hierarchical relationships.”* In this, UN leadership comes closer to contemporary understandings of leadership where the stress is less about leading from above than ‘horizontal’ or ‘lateral’ leadership, connecting with peers from different organizational entities and rallying them behind shared objectives.

As noted in the first chapter coalition building is a basic leadership function. It is particularly important in the UN where diversity is a defining characteristic and a high premium is placed on the ability to bring unity where there are divergent viewpoints. In this regard General Robert Gordon compared multi-faceted UN operations to an imperfectly made gearbox in which the various parts interact with a lot of friction, producing heat and breakdowns. A UN leader’s role, he suggested, was to keep pouring on oil to keep all parts moving together. There are various ways this is done:

Building Trust

Alvaro de Soto suggested: *“Leadership in the UN is different. You don’t win by defeating others but by getting round the main obstacles, to do this you have to have the trust of the main stakeholders.”* Chapter one emphasized the importance of building trust as a prerequisite to exercising influence, which is at the heart of leadership. The ability to build trust is also indispensable to bring about mutual collaboration between entities who are suspicious of another.

Effective UN leaders, dedicate large amounts of time and effort to trying to inspire trust among their key interlocutors. Brahimi, Alvaro de Soto and Vieira de Mello were meticulous and went to great lengths in this regard. Much of it was done by cultivating a personal relationship and consistently showing gestures of respect. While he had many misgivings about US foreign policy and in particular the US’s ambiguous attitude towards the UN, Vieira de Mello gained solid United States support for OCHA operations by developing close personal relations with their two principal diplomats in New York: Ambassadors Richard Holbrooke and Nancy Soderberg.

Balancing competing demands without compromising values

Forging consensus can not occur at the cost of upholding UN values. As John Hailey wrote of effective NGO leaders, what is required is the ability to balance competing demands and pressures without compromising core values.

An illustration of the ability to bridge gaps and uphold principles can be drawn from Vieira de Mello’s action in the early days of the UN Transitional Administration mission in East Timor. After the killing and destruction that followed the announcement of independence vote, order had been restored by an Australian led Security Council endorsed intervention force, called INTERFET under the command of General Cosgrove. In October 1999, Xanana Gusmao, the

long time imprisoned leader of East Timor's independence struggle returned to Dili under INTERFET's auspices.

When Vieira de Mello arrived in Dili in November 1999 to head the UN mission that was to lead the transition to full independence, the atmosphere was volatile and there was a near break down in relations between Xanana Gusmao and General Cosgrove which could have had dramatic and far reaching consequences. After winning the referendum, Xanana had expected that he would gain an immediate say in the running of the territory. Instead he felt hemmed in by his Australian bodyguards and humiliated by the restrictions enforced by INTERFET on the FALINTIL, the resistance group loyal to him that had fought the struggle against Indonesian occupation.

After a potentially explosive incident involving lightly armed Timorese followers of Xanana almost coming to blows with heavily armed Australian soldiers in the UN compound, Vieira de Mello met with Cosgrove and Xanana together. By being mindful of the sensitivities of both and showing due recognition for the contribution of INTERFET but making it clear that UN was there to support the Timorese and their leadership not to establish a new protectorate, Vieira de Mello quickly won the confidence of Xanana and INTERFET. He established a political structure that brought in senior East Timorese leaders. At the same time he managed a smooth handover from INTERFET force to UN command.

Cross cultural communication

Working with diversity in the UN requires specific communications skill. A UNDP document stresses the need for development leaders *"to have the ability to communicate to others whose cognitive development and worldviews are significantly different."* It stresses the importance of being able to bridge *"cognitive and value gaps"*¹⁶³.

Some senior staff are strong communicators but within their own cultural context. They are unable to communicate convincingly to those who not only do not share the same vocabulary but also have different cultural reference points and assumptions.

3.4.3 Being independent and international

When Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called Perez de Cuellar for advice on what it took to do the job well, Perez de Cuellar, according to a close associate, said what was most important was that he safeguards his independence. In a multi-national context, to be trusted being seen as independent is crucial. Perez de Cuellar has said of his own approach on joining the UN:

"I put my nationality in the freezer. I felt that morally, ethically, I couldn't be an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and at the same time act as a Peruvian and try to be in touch with my

¹⁶³ from UNDP *Leadership for human development*, page 10

ambassador...I changed nationality in a way. In a sense , I was no longer Peruvian, I was international.”¹⁶⁴

Independence in a UN context manifests itself by being seen to be international. As UN leaders are symbols of a UN ideal, they are expected to be - or become - international in outlook and approach as well as in the composition of their teams of close collaborators. Senior staff who are perceived in their outlook or approach as predominantly representing the peculiarities of a particular nationality or a region do not enjoy credibility among staff as UN leaders. As Martin Griffiths stated:

“UN staff want to see leaders who transcend national and regional boundaries.”

Ogata, Vieira de Mello and Annan all came to be seen as international symbols. There are a number of factors that contributed to this. They all made sure that their close collaborators were seen to represent the diversity of the UN. None of them favoured staff of their own nationality. Ogata - although firmly backed by the Japanese Government and new to the organization after a long career working in and for Japan - came to UNHCR on her own without any Japanese staff. Her closest advisors – as with Annan and Vieira de Mello – were always from elsewhere. Tom Koenigs, former German official and twice SRSG, summed this up with the simple advice: *“Avoid people of your nationality.”*

Where senior staff are appointed with the help of their Governments, those who make a point of showing independence win credibility with UN staff. Jean-Marie Guehenno was highly respected in DPKO *inter-alia* because it was known that he was ready to defend UN positions that did not necessarily match those of France as in the case of influencing the UNIFIL mandate after the 2006 Israeli incursion of Lebanon. Kieran Prendergast, who was the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, won respect because at the beginning of his tenure he would not involve himself in political issues where Britain had strong interest because of the potential for a conflict of interest. Later with regard to Iraq he took positions different from those of the UK to the annoyance of some of their diplomats. Arbour, after being criticized very early on at the Tribunal for attending a social event with seconded Canadian staff, went out of her way not to be seen to favour other Canadians and in OHCHR, frequently took positions that were at variance with Canada. Vieira de Mello frequently boasted that he had reached the position he was in without ever seeking support from his native Brasil.

Some senior officials have made little secret of maintaining dual loyalties. Although this constitutes a breach of integrity as understood by Hammarskjold, as foreseen in article 100 of the Charter and as elaborated in UN staff rules, it is widely tolerated. A lack of integrity in the Hammarskjold sense of holding exclusive loyalty to the principles of the Charter discredits senior staff in the UN and limits the trust others hold in them. It undermines their authority and ability

¹⁶⁴ Weiss et al, page 325

to influence within the organization and encourages more junior staff to follow a negative example.

3.4.4 Recruit for competence

For many staff a litmus test of independence of senior officials is their approach to recruitment and other appointments and their readiness and ability to withstand political pressure in this regard both from their own and from other regions. A number of member states exert considerable pressure on senior UN officials to recruit or advance individuals on the basis of their nationality and connections. Too often senior officials seek to please member states or win their favour by recruiting and favouring some of their nationals. The ability to withstand such pressure is read by many as an indication of the integrity of an incumbent, of their moral courage and of their commitment to the principles of the organization.

Apart from recruiting from one's own country or giving way to political pressure in appointments, there are other poor appointment practices. Some senior officials do not make any particular effort to secure the highest possible standards of competence, efficiency and integrity. They will treat recruitment and appointments as a priority but seek to advance favourites regardless of their skills and qualifications. They tend to disregard the result of selection processes or use their authority to bend them to their ends. They dispense of posts as favours, to reward past loyalty or to gain it in future. They assume the organization's interests are the same as their own.

In the interviews it was stressed that effective UN leaders dedicate significant amounts of time to recruitment and give primary importance in the process to competence. Effective UN leadership is characterized by placing a high premium on attracting and retaining the best staff. Ogata said that a large part of her job was about ensuring the right people were in the right position. Annan stressed the same point,

“selecting the team is the most important assignment.”

Vieira de Mello and Brahimi also spent time and effort ensuring that they were able to bring the best possible teams with them on any assignment. They seldom relied on what the system itself would propose but actively sought out individuals. As well as taking qualified people whose work they knew from the past, they looked for specific substantive or linguistic expertise and sought recommendations from experts and colleagues.

Strong staff value leadership which values them. Although both Brahimi and Vieira de Mello were deployed to inhospitable environments, such as Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor they were both able to find strong staff from New York and Geneva to follow. As Ahmad Fawzi suggested: *“You can not order the best people to go here or there, but strong leaders are able to attract them.”*

Effective UN leaders do not have undue difficulty reconciling recruitment on the basis of competence with ensuring their teams are international in composition.

Many like Vieira de Mello, Brahimi or Ian Martin over the years cultivate and maintain contacts with staff from many nationalities from across the system. Where teams are already international and seen to be strong, they are better able to withstand political recruitment pressure from specific countries or regions.

For a senior official to completely ignore member state pressure is hard not least as some of those most active in exerting such pressure are donor countries or otherwise influential states. One head of a Geneva based UN entity suggested that while as a matter of principle one has to strongly and explicitly reject such pressure, one inevitably has to find some discreet means of accommodating some of it. Vieira de Mello for example tended to remain uncompromising with regard to his inner team but with regard to his broader set of collaborators could seek out qualified nationals from certain countries or regions to pre-empt pressure and the imposition of undesired candidates.

Annan insisted on the importance of passing a clear message to member states of not being accessible to state pressure. He recounted how he had told the US in 1999 that he wished to appoint someone from a different region as Administrator of UNDP. He asked Europe to propose three names but they insisted on only putting forward one name. He told the Europeans that by giving him only one name they were implying that it was their and not his appointment. He then made his own choice of a different European – Mark Malloch Brown. *“The story how I had done this got around”* he said, *“you need to send signals.”*

3.4.5 Distributed Leadership - Making room for others

Ogata readily acknowledged that any success she achieved in leadership at UNHCR was the result of the effort of many. *“If I was a successful leader,”* she said, *“it was because I was surrounded by good people who were determined for me to do well.”*

The demands on leadership in the UN are manifold and complex. In most cases they will go beyond what any single person can live up to. The best UN leaders, like Ogata, ensure an effective distribution of leadership roles and task. To this end, they do three things: They foster a multi-skilled team of advisors close to them; secondly far from recruiting in their own image, they try and attract staff who have skills that complementary to their own and who will bring in different, at times even contradictory perspectives; thirdly, they make room for others to lead as well and create an atmosphere, where initiative and daring by staff at all levels are felt to be welcome. These components of distributed leadership are illustrated below.

For the concept of distributed leadership however to work effectively, a unifying vision, a shared sense of purpose across the organization is essential. Without this, delegated leadership can be counterproductive and lead to fragmentation of effort and internal conflict.

It's about the team

Tony Banbury stated: at *"the essence of leadership is building the right team, making sure the right person is in the right place is more important than resources."* Similarly Jan Beagle underlined that: *"leadership is about developing effective, diverse leadership teams."*

Some senior UN staff who made their careers in national contexts can be challenged by national diversity. Their previous international experience will often not have included having worked in or supervised multi-national teams. They can be accustomed to the comfort of working within a common national context and can isolate themselves by trying to replicate this by surrounding themselves with advisors from their own country or region.

Ogata and Annan were particularly adept at assembling diverse, multi national teams of strong individuals around them with complementary skills. In the person of Sylvana Foa, her spokeswoman and Soren Jessen-Petersen, her Chef de Cabinet and Director of External Relations, the more self restrained Ogata had extroverts with exceptional communication abilities. Irene Khan, her efficient and articulate Special Assistant, complemented Ogata's academic knowledge of international affairs and strategic thinking abilities with a through knowledge of the institution and of refugee law and exceptional drafting abilities.

At the ICTY, Arbour had a Deputy who perfectly complemented her skills. Arbour set the vision, and with the help of her team planned the strategy. Graham Blewitt - meticulous and conscientious and not shy or adverse to personnel and administrative tasks - focussed on all the detail. Arbour with eloquence, charm and charisma garnered external support. Blewitt remembered everyone's birthday and kept the team internally moving in the right direction. In addition there was Mary Fisk, who unlike the other two knew the UN well and what to do to gain the support required support from the system.

In both the case of Annan and Ogata, reliance on a small, exceptionally strong and dedicated team of diverse individuals allowed these leaders to make the institution appear stronger than some parts of it actually were. It allowed them to be quick and nimble and pro-active in setting direction and communicating a vision. However, it can also have downsides.

Small, highly empowered teams close to the principal, while highly effective, are easy targets for accusations of favouritism and non-consultation. Where they act with independence and speed they can quickly become detached from the rest of the institution and grow out of touch and less able to exercise influence internally. Having team members who are good at outreach and know the institution well and constantly cultivate contacts within the organization is essential to keeping the institution at large connected.

As Ogata's Chef de Cabinet, Soren-Jessen Petersen was aware of the danger of a gap developing between Ogata and the close team around her and the rest of the institution. He prevented this by ensuring broad accessibility to Ogata and by ensuring constant communication and information exchange back and forth

between her office and the rest of the organization. He also made sure that Ogata did not single out her team but evoked and praised contributions from across the institution.

Bring in people who are strong and disagree with you

In trying to account for Toyota's success (prior to 2009 !), an article in the Harvard Business Review of June 2008, noted that in the company: "*confronting your boss is acceptable, bringing bad news to the boss is encouraged and ignoring the boss is often excused.*"¹⁶⁵ This is behaviour not usually associated with the UN but something approaching it characterizes the attitude of effective UN leaders.

Strong UN leaders are not shy about bringing in people who disagree. Vieira de Mello actively sought to have someone close and with easy access to him, who had a tendency to contradict him. He liked to have his views tested and to be made aware of other positions. Likewise, Ahmad Fawzi said of Annan, "*he sought to gather great minds – not subservience.*"

Annan himself stressed the importance of selecting people with complementary skills: "*It is well documented that we tend to recruit people who are like us. You have to resist this. You are not forming a club of friends, you have to bring in people who you may not like, but who are complementary.*" A readiness to have people of a different mindset close to one is also related to self-confidence. Effective UN leaders are not threatened by having strong people close to them with differing views. Long time collaborators, who become confidantes, can serve an effective purpose in being the voice to systematically confront a leader with varying and unpopular views.

A risk of having a strong team with diverse and sometimes contradictory view is to get paralysed in discussion. To counter this, decisiveness on the part of the team leader is essential. Filippo Grandi, said of Ogata in this respect: "*She was excellent not only in choosing people but also in listening to their advice. She handled advice judiciously, knew when to take it and when to ignore it – she was not paralysed by opposing views.*"

UN senior managers all face restrictions to hire new staff or reallocate roles of existing staff. This can be a major constraint to building a complementary, diverse team, but one which can be overcome with time and organizational growth.

Delegate and let others shine

Effective UN leaders, foster and encourage many other strong leaders. Annan and many others interviewed, stressed the importance of delegation. But fostering leadership is more than passing tasks down. It is about using authority to remove the political and bureaucratic obstacles that prevent others taking leadership initiative. Under Annan, the careers and public visibility of

¹⁶⁵ *The contradictions that drive Toyota's success*, page 103

international figures like Vieira de Mello, Lakhdar Brahimi, Jan Egeland, Marti Ahtissaari, Alvaro de Soto and Mark Malloch Brown thrived. Far from worrying about being overshadowed, strong leaders push others in to the sunlight. The Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees, Janet Lim, summed this up:

“Good leaders make room for others.”

Unlike any of her predecessors or successors, Ogata regularly appointed high-level envoys whom she gave considerable visibility and whom she encouraged to adopt high profile public stances. Vieira de Mello was her Special Envoy for Voluntary Repatriation to Cambodia and she had a series of high profile envoys for former Yugoslavia. These envoys greatly increased public knowledge of UNHCR and supported by Ogata were able to greatly enhance its impact with governments.

Coach

Part of helping others lead is coaching. The best UN leaders attract talent and also cultivate it. They build up the confidence of those who work under them and dedicate time to informal coaching. Gerald Walzer observed *“too many UN managers abdicate their responsibility of on the job training.”*

Management and working with the bureaucracy are essential

Some successful UN leaders went out of their way to avoid UN bureaucracy and shied away from many management tasks. They nevertheless ensured that they had someone close whom they could rely on for this. Vieira de Mello and Arbour were often vocal about their dislike of UN bureaucracy. Vieira de Mello nevertheless treated it with respect and made sure he had among his trusted staff someone who was effective in dealing with it. In OCHA, a Director, Ed Tsui - who had unparalleled knowledge of the Secretariat - played this role with great efficiency. As indicated by successive UN financial scandals, exclusive focus on political objectives to the neglect of management is no longer accepted.

Knowledge of the system and the actors within it are key to getting around many of the inevitable bureaucratic blockages that occur. Staff who join the institution at a senior level are disadvantaged in this respect and can become embittered with frustration. Ensuring someone is close who knows the system and people well and enjoys finding solutions to bureaucratic impasses can be critical to being effective in UN leadership.

3.4.6 Leadership as a network of critical relationships

All UN leaders are shaped by the expectations of their followers. Annan, Ogata, Vieira de Mello in 1997 at OCHA and Arbour in 2004 in OHCHR took over demoralised offices from predecessors who were perceived in different ways to have significantly fallen short of the expectations of their staff. They entered jobs at low points in staff morale with many staff vesting high hopes in them and wanting them to see them succeed. The expectations vested in them gave them opportunities not all senior staff enjoy.

All UN leaders are also influenced by those who work close to them. The type and level of influence will vary. In Samantha Power's biography of Vieira de Mello, "Chasing the Flame", the latter comes across as a lone, heroic leader surrounded by willing, capable but largely inconsequential followers. In Jim Traub's biography of Annan, "The Best of Intentions", by contrast, the Secretary-General is portrayed as a man at the centre of an exceptionally strong team with other actors in it often writing the script. Traub's portrayal of leadership being the result of the efforts of many around a pivotal figure tends to be truer in real life than the image of leadership exercised by the lone hero.

Ogata's stature as High Commissioner for Refugees - as she herself and many who were with her in HCR at that time readily acknowledge - was a combination of the efforts of many. In any analysis that goes below the surface, it is hard to separate the success of Ogata from the work of her close collaborators at the time.

Both followers and leaders themselves invest in the image of an individual as **the** leader. Leaders are symbols and their power and influence is partly derived from the fiction of a single person at the top of a pyramid. Behind the scene, leadership is always exercised by a close and variable network of people linked through diverse and evolving relationships.

Far from being a sign of weakness the best UN leaders are aware of this and dedicate time and effort to finding the best, most complementary individuals with whom to surround themselves. They invest in the relationships and tenaciously hold on to good staff.

Recapitulation: Key practices of effective UN leaders

- ***They recognize their role as leaders, their potential and limitations*** – They are self-critical, as aware of their weaknesses as they are confident of their strengths. They are humble as well as ambitious.
- ***They don't try and do it alone, they build a diverse team*** – They ensure the best people are in the most appropriate positions. They chose advisors based on complementarity; they chose for competence and also people who will have the courage to contradict them and to draw their attention to what they may prefer not to know.
- ***They are non-national, non-regional and cultivate a UN culture*** – They surround themselves with staff from elsewhere. They are aware of their national mannerisms and can communicate across cultures. They are seen to be independent of any Government, especially their own.
- ***They have a profound understanding of the terrain they seek to change*** – They are in command of all the facts and a large part of the detail. They understand the constraints, the tensions, the complexity and contradictions; they understand the power games behind the scenes.

They know what they can and cannot control. They are attentive of the main stakeholders and powerful states. They remain aware of how others perceive them, their position and the organization.

- ***They formulate and communicate a vision*** – They are fully aware of but don't get bogged down in the contradictions and the complexities of the situation. They see beyond these and are clear about what needs to be done. They chose a limited and realistic number of priorities and set ambitious goals. They induce a sense of purpose, remind all why they are there, why they joined the UN, why the UN matters. They communicate a vision clearly and repeatedly.
- ***They promote what the UN stands for*** – They know that integrity in the UN is ultimately about upholding the Charter based principles and norms the organisation stands for. They foster the moral authority of the organization and recognize that while this is not always expedient, it lends the institution its only lasting leverage. They focus on making a difference for those who need the UN most, especially when it is difficult and controversial to do so.
- ***Are wise and courageous*** – They have the moral courage to say no and to stand up for a position even when to do so will draw attack. They are courageous but in a calculated way, not impulsively. They are realistic but understand when realism needs to be stretched and that at times, trying is important even if failure is inevitable.
- ***Build alliances*** – They lead laterally and from behind when necessary. They can convince others of their vision and foster unity of purpose among UN and other international actors.
- ***They know it's all about the staff*** – They know their staff, their fears and hopes. They remain in touch with staff at all levels and physical locations. They are accessible and work to gain the support of staff, make them their allies. They show they care. They consult downwards. They create a resonant and conducive working atmosphere.
- ***They make room for others to lead*** - They remove the obstacles that stand in the way of leadership by staff at all levels. They encourage staff to take initiatives and let them take risks. They coach them and build their confidence.
- ***They are resilient and look for long term as much as short term gains.*** They are calm and patient, don't take too much personally. They under react to stress, they are above the noise. They are conscious of Urquhart's dictum:

"... hold on to your belief in reason and compassion despite all political manoeuvring.... A determined effort to do what seems objectively right ... in the end produce(s) results."

Conclusion

“We should be more modest in our words, but not in our performance. The true test of success for the UN is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver for those who need us most. Given the enduring purposes and inspiring principles of our organization, we need not shout its praises or preach its virtues. We simply need to live them every day: step by step, programme by programme, mandate by mandate.”

Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon,

in his acceptance speech on 13 October 2006

Ten main findings:

- The generic leadership attributes and styles described in the first chapter also apply in the UN. What makes for good leadership elsewhere is also required for effective leadership in the UN. The particular set of challenges UN leaders face are a variation of themes encountered in the generic leadership literature.
- Leadership ability is required as much as political suitability in senior UN positions. Leadership does not come naturally with an appointment to a senior position. It requires knowledge, effort and skill - which some senior staff can bring to the job, and which all senior staff can strive to acquire or improve.
- There is a need for a UN wide strategy for leadership development, at all levels: for team -, operational - and strategic leaders. Such a strategy should be linked to common leadership assessment and selection criteria. To succeed, any leadership development strategy needs not only the commitment of training and human resource professionals but will also require the whole-hearted support of the UN Secretary-General as well as of UN agency and department heads.
- The UN is handicapped by albeit improved but still unsophisticated, politicized selection procedures for the most senior staff, which yield haphazard results. Political and other criteria can count for more than leadership ability in selection processes. In the absence of consistently strong leadership from above, leadership initiative at a lower level is particularly important in the UN.
- A number of factors position senior staff well to exercise leadership, but other contextual factors militate against it. There are numerous political and bureaucratic constraints, which can become a pretext for passivity and a habit of political expediency. Leadership in the UN is in essence

about not being resigned to but overcoming the constraints, about creating space for independent action.

- UN leadership is also about managing and growing beyond a series of contradictions. It is about catering to diverse stakeholders but not losing sight of UN norms and principles. It is about understanding complexity, threats and tensions, but avoiding being mired in them. It is about bringing clarity and a value based vision where there is short-term thinking, divisions and uncertainty.
- Discretion, caution, and being mindful of political prerogatives and member state interests are not ends in themselves but means to achieve results. Leadership in the UN is as much about courage and risk taking as it is about caution. It requires political discernment but is more about upholding Charter based principles and promoting the implementation of international norms than it is about political expediency.
- Integrity in the UN is demonstrated by being able to stand up for UN norms and principles and beneficiaries precisely when it is difficult and controversial to do so, and about the ability to win others over to the same cause. Ultimately UN leaders are judged less by how much they were liked by the powerful, than by how much they did for the powerless.
- UN leadership is about external and internal coalition building, it is more about lateral leadership than the exercise of formal hierarchical powers.
- Strong UN leaders like, care and empower their staff. They also dedicate a great amount of time to staff selection and know how to resist state pressure in making appointments.
- UN leadership is less about individuals than it is about the leadership teams that are built up around individuals. The best UN leaders are, above all, notable for the competence and complementarity of those they have assembled around them. They do not recruit in their own image but seek out the best, including some who will disagree with them. They also ensure that leadership responsibilities are encouraged at every level of the organization and see it as part of their job to remove hurdles to leadership from below.

On imperfection among UN leaders

Much of the generic teaching on leadership, can give the impression that leaders are beings who combine an extraordinary variety of qualities and have few, if any, faults. Leadership in general and in the UN in particular requires a combination of multiple attributes, which rarely if ever are combined in one person. Furthermore as explained, the UN context is characterised by a series of tensions. UN leaders have to manage these tensions and walk a tightrope between conflicting interests. Many inevitably lose their balance and ere on one side or the other.

All successful UN leaders were lacking in some respects and all made mistakes, some of them major. A number of senior officials who have reputations as strong leaders – like Louise Arbour, Jim Grant or Sergio Vieira de Mello – were not perceived to be good managers. Kofi Annan and Sadako Ogata are broadly perceived to have remained in office too long and lost touch in their last years. Annan's first term was a success while for much of his second term he was on the defensive, mired in handling accusations of bias and managerial weakness. While he brought in much exceptional talent to the organization he also had a reputation for favouring his friends. Ogata had two and half terms and many of her admirers felt a departure two years earlier would have left her at the peak of her reputation. By contrast, Arbour in OHCHR and Vieira de Mello in OCHA did not stay long enough to bring about lasting institutional change (even where they achieved organizational growth).

Instances of where the moral compasses of Annan and Vieira de Mello went off course are well documented. As Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping at the time of the worse ever failure of the UN in Rwanda, Annan was well placed to speak up but he is not remembered for having promoted a robust stand of the UN Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) towards unfolding atrocities.

Likewise Vieira de Mello's pragmatism and eagerness to win the trust of major stakeholders occurred, at times, at the expense of principle. After the 1996 he supported the Government of Tanzania in their forced and violent return of hundreds of thousands of Rwandan asylum seekers, disregarding what the refugees wanted. Later in Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to some critics, he practiced a policy of appeasement towards the Bosnian Serbs and perhaps in part unwittingly, lent his support to efforts aimed at delaying the NATO military intervention that would finally end the war.

The bottom line

If the most effective UN leaders are, how does one distinguish them from other, less effective senior staff? Bennis has suggested that it is one of life's paradoxes that "*good leaders rise to the top in spite of their weakness, while bad leaders rise because of their weakness.*"¹⁶⁶ In good leaders, usually the flaws do not predominate. With the best UN leaders there is some awareness of their weaknesses and a willingness to be open to criticism. They will also, as indicated previously, try to attract people to work with them who can make up for areas where they are lacking.

Not all faults are necessarily a disadvantage. Most people want to work for someone with imperfections. In the case of Vieira de Mello, many were attracted to him because he was brilliant and able, and because he had obvious weaknesses. His flaws made it easier to identify with him.

However exceptional the leader, the nature and contradictions of the UN and the uncertainties inherent in the larger context will often prevent sustained success.

¹⁶⁶ Bennis, page 44

The careers of the most effective UN leaders can end in apparent failure: Annan left the UN with many staff disenchanted, and was both criticized by the United States and seen by many as too close to the United States. Vieira de Mello in Iraq, as Samantha Power meticulously documents in her biography of him, failed to achieve the leverage he had hoped for. When Ogata left UNHCR, the credibility of its operational capacity was shaken and it was perceived by many as being bloated in size and suffering from unjustified institutional arrogance. Arbour's thrust for growth and relevance in OHCHR evoked unprecedented hostility from many countries and led to moves to curtail the High Commissioner's independence.

Drawing on the findings of this study, there are nevertheless a number of questions one can ask that help distinguish the effective UN leaders from those that were less so: To what extent did they demonstrate courage and independence? How much did they really care and convince others to care about those supposed to benefit from their mandates? How much did they rally and motivate their staff to go beyond their own capacities? How entrepreneurial were they? To what extent did they bring focus, clarity and a sense of purpose? How did they manage the severe limitations the system imposes, both bureaucratic and political? To what extent were they victims of the limitations of the system or did they manage to transcend or even change its limitations? What sort of people did they bring in or promote and what sort of people left under their watch? Did they recruit for competence or under political pressure?

A description of what makes for good leadership in the UN leads to the question as to the ultimate objective of UN leadership. What is the measuring stick of success in UN leadership ?

A number of UN leaders who benefited from a conducive context were able to create organizational growth. Few UN leaders will manage to actually bring about major change in the culture and orientation of their department or agency. A number have been adept at using the platform and gaining an international profile in association with the issue that their organization deals with, but that has not always translated in to a lasting impact on the issue or for the clients concerned.

The uniqueness of the UN stems from the Charter, from the international norms at its foundation and the ideal of international service. Effective UN leaders create space and validity for these amidst competing national and regional political prerogatives. They influence how outsiders view the institution and their level of willingness to give it the benefit of the doubt. Their example holds the cynics at bay. They reassert the relevance of the UN as an institution and visibly enhance its space for impact in the service of '*We the peoples*'. They gain results for peace, for human rights, for development and social justice.

Good strategic leadership in the UN can also be judged by what is left behind, the longer term impact: the level of inspiration, good ideas, solid structures and morale left over. The best UN leaders inspire others long after they have gone to keep trying to make the difference.

Acknowledgements

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I was particularly dependent for guidance on a number of generous and knowledgeable colleagues and friends both in the conceptualization of the study and in its execution. Piers Campbell provided indispensable encouragement and guidance throughout. His partner at MANNET, Judith Hushagen, also gave many useful comments during the drafting process. Mike Alford, of UNHCR and formerly of the UN Staff System College, was also a critical and enthusiastic guide and reviewer from the outset. Louise Arbour's interest, time and wisdom constituted a foundation stone of the study. Naresh Perinpanayagam of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was another consistent supporter. His revisions of drafts improved them considerably. He also brought many fresh ideas to how I should look at the subject. Diego Zorilla, of the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL), provided detailed and helpful comments on the second chapter. Karina Gerlach of DPA and Andrew Gilmour, RSG in Belgrade provided insightful comments to a late draft. Professor John Hailey, a consultant and leadership teacher, helped me understand and elaborate why the theme was important in a UN context. Andrew Clapham of the Geneva Graduate Institute provided advice on working methods, which proved critical given the time constraints. Professor John Antonakis of the University of Lausanne provided essential guidance on reading material.

Particular thanks are due to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC) in Geneva and its Director, Martin Griffiths, for hosting me while I was writing this study. The beautiful location of HDC is matched by an atmosphere of exceptional friendliness, good humour and intellectual stimulus. I felt privileged to be able to work in such an inspiring environment.

Finally, the study could not have been written without the contribution of all those I interviewed. Their readiness to give up their time and share their insights with great frankness was very much appreciated.

Annex 1: List of Persons Interviewed

Name (In alphabetical order)	Date of interview(s)
Karen Abu-Zayd <i>Former Commissioner General, UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) 2005-2009; formerly with UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)</i>	07/08/09
John Adair <i>Leadership author; Honorary Professor of Leadership at the China Executive Leadership Academy in Pudong; UN Chair in Strategic Leadership</i>	19/05/09 and 9/06/09
Salman Ahmed <i>Senior Policy Advisor, US Mission to the UN in New York; formerly with UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in HQ and field postings.</i>	3/06/09
Mike Alford <i>Deputy Director of Human Resources, UNHCR; formerly at UNSSC</i>	28/04/09
Kofi Annan <i>UN Secretary-General 1997-2006</i>	29/09/09
Louise Arbour <i>President, International Crisis Group; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 2004-2008; former Canadian Supreme Court Judge and Chief Prosecutor, ICTY and ICTR</i>	29-30/05/09
Tony Banbury <i>Assistant Secretary-General (ASG), UN Department of Field Support (DFS); formerly World Food Programme (WFP), Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and US Government</i>	01/06/09
Jan Beagle <i>Deputy Executive Director of UNAids; formerly in senior management roles for three UN Secretary-Generals, including as ASG for Human Resources Management.</i>	01/05/09
Piers Campbell <i>Managing Director, MANNET (Geneva-based consultants on organisational change, leadership etc)</i>	2/04/09 and 15/04/09
Kathleen Cravero <i>President Oak Foundation; formerly in leadership positions in UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNAids, at headquarters and in the field</i>	25/06/09

- Jeri Darling** 27/08/09
Vice-President of Leadership and Organizational Development, Encompass (the company now running UN Secretariat leadership and management development programmes)
- Alvaro de Soto** 09/08/09
UN Special Coordinator of Middle East Peace Process 2005-2007; formerly with Executive Office of UN Secretary-General, and field postings as a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG)
- Ahmad Fawzi** 2/06/09
Director, UN Department of Public Information (DPI); formerly Director DPI London and with Office of the Spokesperson in UN Headquarters in New York, and numerous UN field missions
- Julian Fleet** 15/04/09
Deputy Director Rollback Malaria, World Health Organisation; formerly with UNAids, UNDP and UNHCR and a private law firm
- Tim Ford** 12/05/09
Former Head of Mission/Chief of Staff UNTSO 1998-2000, Former Military Adviser DPKO 2000-2002
- Malcolm Goodale** 18/06/09
Head Development Cooperation Resident Coordinator System Learnig Support, UNSSC
- Robert Gordon** 13/05/09
Force Commander UNMEE (United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea) 2002-'05
- Filippo Grandi** 30/06/09
Commissioner General UNRWA; formerly Deputy SRSG (DSRSG) UN mission in Afghanistan, and senior field assignments with UNHCR
- Martin Griffiths** 8/04/09
Director, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva; formerly Director of OCHA, and with NGOs, UNICEF and British Government
- John Hailey** 13/07/09
Consultant; Visiting Professor of Leadership Studies, Cass Business School, London City University
- Sandra Haji-Ahmed** 1/06/09
Director, Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM), formerly with UNICEF
- David Harland** 4/06/09
Director, DPKO; formerly Director of DPKO Best Practices Division, with OCHA, UN Missions in East Timor and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Judith Hushagen** 11/06/09
Managing Director, MANNET

Maria Hutchinson 28/07/09
Chief of Learning Section, OHRM; formerly with UNHCR

Jafar Javan 18/06/09
Deputy Director UNSSC, formerly senior UNDP staff member

Soren Jessen-Petersen 17/07/09
Lecturer, Georgetown University; Director, Independent Diplomat; formerly SRSG Kosovo 2004-2006, Assistant High Commissioner for UNHCR, and, inter-alia, with the European Union (EU)

Bintu Keita 15/05/09
Deputy SRSG Burundi, formerly with UNICEF

Irene Khan 10/07/09
Secretary-General of Amnesty-International 2001-2009; formerly with UNHCR

Tom Koenigs 10/05/09
German MP; formerly SRSG Afghanistan 2006-2007, SRSG Guatemala and DSRSG Kosovo

Kyung-wha Kang 5/09/09
ASG and Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); former senior South Korean diplomat

David Lambo 23/07/09
Former Assistant High Commissioner and former Director of UNHCR

Janet Lim 26/06/09
Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR; formerly in senior field posts with UNHCR and assignments with UNAids and DPKO

Dennis McNamara 8/04/09
Former Director of UNHCR, DSRSG in East Timor and Kosovo

Susana Malcorra 2/06/09
USG for UN Department of Field Support (DFS); formerly leadership roles in WFP and private sector

Ian Martin 29/07/09
SRSG Nepal 2006-2009; formerly lead roles in UN peace missions in East Timor, Haiti, Eritrea/Ethiopia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Secretary-General of Amnesty International 1986-2002

Claire Messina 29/04/09
Senior Coordinator, Humanitarian System's strengthening Project, OCHA; formerly with UNHCR and International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Michael Moller 6/04/09
Executive Director Kofi Annan Foundation; formerly SRSG for Cyprus 2005-2008; Senior Officer in Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General, and with DPA and UNHCR in the field

Ariel Morvan 1/06/09
Chief of Senior Leadership Appointments Section, DPKO/DFS; formerly with UNTAET (East Timor)

Nader Mousavizadeh 9/07/09
International Institute of Strategic Studies; formerly with Goldman Sachs and in the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General

Sadako Ogata 22/07/09
President, Japan Agency for International Cooperation (JICA), UN High Commissioner for Refugees 1991-2001; former diplomat and academic

Naresh Perinpanayagam 5/07/09
United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS); with OHCHR

Doris Pfister 20/04/09
Director, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Behrooz Sadry 15/05/09
Longest serving UN professional staff member, almost 50 years; last post as DSRSG in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) 2003-2006

Hans Joerg Strohmeyer 2/06/09
Chief of Policy Development and Studies Branch OCHA, Geneva; formerly with UN in New York, Lebanon, Sudan, Kosovo, East Timor, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Margareta Wahlstrom 22/05/09
ASG for Disaster Risk Reduction OCHA; formerly Deputy Head of OCHA, DSRSG in Afghanistan and leadership position in International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC)

Gerald Walzer 29/06/09
UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner 1993-1999, various senior UN assignments after retirement

Teresa Whitfield 8/04/09
Senior Fellow at Center of International Studies; formerly with DPA

Neill Wright 30/04/09
Deputy Inspector-General UNHCR; formerly various UNHCR field representative positions and before that Officer in British Army

Fatemeh Ziai 30/06/09
Chief of Training Service DPKO, formerly Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and UN missions in Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina

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