Chapter 1

Leadership: Its Influence on Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

Andrew H. Campbell
International Peace and Leadership Institute, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to drive peace actors into new ways of thinking in developing peacebuilding activities by applying leadership frameworks to stabilize and reconstruct national institutions in a post-conflict environment. The examination will highlight the role of global leadership constructs play within peace-making, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. The discussion presents a mixture of leadership and peace-building disciplines by examining the intersection of theoretical leadership models with international relations, and conflict resolution construct as peacebuilders reconstitute national instruments of power in a post-conflict environment. More importantly, the purpose is to generate new knowledge that overlays leadership theory and application frameworks with its impact on the organizational and operational effectiveness of peace development institutions and organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Human nature has not changed since the beginning of time. Research suggests that the root cause of interstate and intrastate conflict stems from ideological, ethnic, religious, and socio-political differences between cultures (Cashman, 2014; Dursun-Ozkunca, 2016; Van Dijk, 2000). As a result, the global environment is characterized by regional instability, failed states, increased weapons proliferation, and global terrorism, and requires greater global leadership. According to Buchanan-Smith and Scriven (2011), there is a concern among conflict resolution scholar-practitioners that peacebuilding “is underperforming due to a lack of effective leadership sometimes described as a leadership void” (p. 9). Hames (2007) stated that, “intentional or not, we have designed a world in which much of what we do and how we do it simply cannot continue. Whole system change in the pattern of human activities is required” (p. 278). There is a commonality of human interests in economic security, political freedom, and protection of human rights, all of which transcends cultural and geographical boundaries.

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With an increase in the lethality of transnational conflict among state and non-state actors, the international community has struggled in responding to the rise of failing states and human rights violations (Cashman, 2014; Fukuyama, 2004). The reason is that leaders plan for war to resolve political and economic issues without planning for peace (Cashman, 2014; Coleman, Deutsch & Marcus, 2014). Additionally, the tension between state and non-state leaders can motivate, escalate, or defuse situations, resulting in the possibility of inciting action. One of the global leadership challenges in today’s atmosphere is understanding the impact of applying leadership principles to the international political and economic environment. In fact, with the increased global political and economic tension “leaders are exposed to many complex challenges and, what we know about leadership theory and development may no longer be effective in this global context” (Story, 2011, p. 375). As a result, scholars contend that the theoretical application of “leadership today is profoundly different from what it was yesterday” (Hames, 2007, p. 9).

Given the rise of state and non-state conflict, there is an urgency to investigate the role global leadership plays in resolving identity-based conflict, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, economic development and political reform, and the rebuilding of state governance structures. Cashman (2017) and Dursun-Ozkunca (2016) contend that as human rights abuses and economic deprivation persist, the drive to de-escalate the violence by civil society leaders will be ineffective. Research argues that scholarship on international affairs has diversified since the end of Cold War due to the emergence of non-state actors and violent extremist organizations (Kaufman, Parker, Howell, & Doty, 2004). With the rise of violent terrorist organizations (VEOs) to destabilize national systems, examining the leader’s role in conflict escalation and cessation has never been more urgent (Cashman, 2014). More importantly, it will require critical leadership from the international regional, and sub-regional players to de-escalate the conflict and to develop and execute peace development initiatives (Crocker, Hampson, & Aall, 2007). The urgency to understand the impact national and non-state leaders have on war and peace has never been higher in the halls of governments and peace developmental institutions.

The importance of leadership in conflict resolution and peace development organizations spans across societal and cultural boundaries. Leaders of peace development organizations need to understand how culture impacts the leader-follower relationship and practices. The reason is that the complexity of cultural leadership within peace development organizations frequently tests the cohesive direction, ingroup relationships, and intercultural communication to plan and execute stabilization and reconstruction activities (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Scholars postulate that leaders need an awareness as patterns of cross-cultural dialogue frequently lead not only to misunderstanding and misinterpretation when discussing strategic issues but also impacts the organizational culture and climate (Bolman & Deal, 2008, Mendenhall et al., 2013). As a result, miscues and misunderstandings in a cross-cultural environment frequently leads to organizational failure and toxic leadership. For that reason, Davis (2011) notes the leadership challenge is that

in the halls of government and corporate boardrooms across the country. Arrogance, pouting, tantrums, personal attacks, and betrayal of trust seem to be the order of the day … demonstrate the kind of sandbox leadership that is all too prevalent right now. The timing could not be worse. The nation’s current problems, as vast and overwhelming as they are, appear secondary to the whims of spoiled children, unwilling to play well together. At a time when we need solid, grounded leadership more than ever, we seem to be in short supply of adults who exact like, well…like adults. (para. 2)