Chapter 14

Role of Leaders in Post-Conflict Societies:
The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia

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ABSTRACT

When Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić was attacked on the 11th of July 2015 in Srebrenica on the day of the commemoration and burial of the victims of the genocide committed in that town in 1995, he characterized it as an assassination attempt. Furthermore, he stated that “hand of peace” that he was offering was rejected once more from the “Bosnian” side. Of course, he didn’t mention that he, in the previous six months, together with Serbia’s ally, Russia, advocated that the UN Security Council rejects the resolution that would call all sides to accept the final decisions of the ICTY and draw necessary lessons in regard of commemoration of the 20 years from the Srebrenica Genocide. He didn’t mention that he is, along with the leaders of Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, among those negating the Srebrenica Genocide (sarcastically calling it “grave crime”). He also did not mention his inflammatory rhetoric in the Parliament of Serbia in 1995 when during the events in Srebrenica he said “If you kill one Serb, we will kill 100 Muslims.”

ABOUT LEADERSHIP

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a leader is: “someone or something that leads others”, or “a powerful person who controls or influences what other people do: a person who leads a group, organization, country, etc.”, or “a person, group, or organization that is the best or most successful in some activity”. No matter whether good or bad, leadership means some kind of leading the way, while those who are not leaders will follow. Implicitly, those who lead are supposed to know where they are going, since those who are following don’t necessary have to think about that (because they chose to follow,
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not to lead). Obviously, leading people effectively is a tremendous challenge, a great opportunity, and a serious responsibility (Nahavandi, 2009). In post-conflict societies this is even more so.

This world is a world of changes; of technological progress; of communication and exchange of ideas in a way that not even brightest minds of the past centuries could not have foreseen or predicted. But this world is also a world of wars, violence and technology that allows people to be violent on the scale that is terrifying (probably also not imaginable some centuries ago). There was some hope in past, that once, when this world has enough food and material wealth, there will be no need for conflict and violence, that the lessons from the two world wars will be learned and that the international law and organizations will, domestically and internationally, transform countries individually and globally into “democratic” world respecting not only human rights, but also humanity. That didn’t happen. Or at least did not happen entirely. One of the reasons for that lays in sole fact that the dominant type of state organization today (capitalism) is interested in gold, not in humanity or human happiness. Not to mention that every country has a ministry of defense or industry, but none that of happiness (actually there are few in the world that do have such ministry). So, while the world was (and still is) preoccupied with gold, happiness was disappearing, now probably more than ever. The dream about making of an equitable, peaceful, free and humane world still remains a dream, while the world is investing in producing more gold.

The UN Resolution titled “Transforming our world: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (2015) rightly states that: “There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.” In it, the UN recognizes that something is still seriously wrong with this world, stating that there is an urgent need to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. Will that be fulfilled in praxis, is yet to be seen.

Do today’s leaders lead their followers to their desired goals and everlasting changes in their lives? Do leaders lead their followers to something good when they desire something bad? Do leaders in the societies of the world care about anything else other than to be re-elected, as some authors suggest (Chiozza & Goemans, 2004). Or the self-interest or the interest of the group they belonging to? Working for the common good? Do post-conflict leaders stand as bright examples in the societies? Promoting humanity, solidarity and reconciliation? It’s hardly the case. Some authors even argue that unethical behavior of the leaders in human societies has existed from “the beginning of time” (Trevino, Brown, 2004), but it seems that nowadays this is more true than ever before. According to these authors, complexity and ever-changing environment is more ethically challenging and offers more opportunities to express greed. As colorfully described by Seizović (2014), Bosnian politicians, using foggy reflections, every day attack upon mind of trivial regiment of ordinary people, while their own struggle for more money and power is being portrayed as the care for a better future of the nation they belong to, or, the care for the state of wellbeing. Such nation, according to Seizović, is an ideal raw material for establishing an exclusivist thinking pattern in ethnically fabricated and brainwashed heads. Furthermore, some authors state that leadership emerges in response to conflict as such (Burns, 1978).

So, What Kind of Leaders Does This World of Today Need?

This “new world” undoubtedly needs “new leaders” since it is more than obvious that “the old ones” with “old habits and approaches” do not fit the needs of “the new world” (Gerzon, 2006). Assuming responsibility as a leader, in other words, certainly involves accountability, dependability, authority,
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