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ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN A TURBULENT LEBANON

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INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union in the late 1980’s, Lebanon has been challenged to reform its status quo and locate its position within the new world order, the globalization of the 21st century. Globalization, that ancient-modern phenomenon, is “to address a range of perennial—political, economic, social, developmental, environmental, gender and human rights—concerns and injustices.” (Haynes, 2005, p. 9) It also influences the development of countries and introduces change by various means into the cultural traits of the country, i.e., economy, politics, arts, technologies, customs and traditions, etc. Humans have a natural tendency to resist change or maybe being changed; consequently, the real challenge facing any leader is to move people down the scale, from defiance to compliance and then to alliance.

The Taef Accord (1989) and the termination of warfare in 1990 were not sufficient to put Lebanon on path of healthy developmental change. Unfortunately, this crucial period did not establish political rehabilitation and economic boom. Instead, the country lost its sovereignty to Syria and became economically weak because of the poorly conceived strategies and ineffective tactics that the different governments have followed since then. Moreover,
opponents to the Syrian regime were exiled. Warlords were transformed into civil political leaders; militiamen became public sector employees. In consequence, many political leaders accepted to hold governmental positions, compromising sometimes our dignity and integrity. Lebanon today is still on the edge of globalization.

On the other hand, it is not easy to answer ‘who will lead Lebanon through the process of change’ or ‘how can the current rulers adapt to the challenges of globalization,’ especially if we consider the consequences of the 30 year turbulent period that left Lebanon with several chronic syndromes, e.g., a turbulent political situation, governmental corruption, social severance, ethical collapse, abuse of the Earth’s ecosystems, insolvency, violation of Human Rights, etc. Unfortunately, the latest national elections in Lebanon reproduced almost the same political leaders who were and had been acting on the political stage in Lebanon in and since the late 1980’s. Thus, reform has become an urgent request on all levels, social, political, and economic. Regrettably, Lebanon is still regarded by many developed countries as a ‘failed state’, a state that has never practiced accountability and transparency in its public and private sectors.

1. THE TURBULENT SOCIO-POLITICAL SCENE OF LEBANON (1975-2005)

Throughout history, Lebanon has witnessed dramatic but not unexpected series of events that caused, in 1943, the emergence of an independent heterogeneous country formed of different ethnicities and religious denominations and socio-economic classes. This is a sign of diversity for some; a reflection of dichotomy for others. Naturally, whoever wants to study the sociopolitical scene of Lebanon, especially between 1975 and 2005, has to look for what its people fight about, its whys and wherefores. In fact, the quarrels are usually the conclusion of historical groundwork. During the period mentioned above, the rulers and governors of Lebanon have been facing crucial crises, such as the crisis of identity, the crisis of legitimacy, the crisis of penetration, the crisis of participation, and the crisis of distribution. As a result, Lebanon remained a ‘failed state’ that gradually collapsed during two interrelated periods, each of 15 years. The first was the ‘unsuccessful period of war’, lasting from 1975 to 1990, and the second, the ‘unsuccessful period of peace,’ lasting from 1990 to 2005. The former was unsuccessful because none of the militias, political parties, or warlords who waged war reached complete victory. On the contrary, they destroyed the country’s human and material capital and caused the death or the immigration of hundred of thousands of citizens. The latter was also unsuccessful because the warlords and militiamen could not build ‘peace with
honor.’ Peace with honor does not mean ‘who has the gold, sets the rules.’ ‘Peace with honor’ means peace that is founded on ‘the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family’, as stated in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Thus, these two unsuccessful periods have left the country with several chronic ailments and undesirable consequences: Lebanon has become a turbulent nation with economic problems; political problems; and social problems.

Since the foundation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 until the present, many Lebanese have believed that the fundamental problem that Lebanon faces is its cultural and national identity. Even the Taef Accord (1989) allegedly solved the problem in a short statement, ‘Lebanon is Arab in belonging and identity.’ Actually, the Taef Accord statement did nothing than neglect the multicultural nature of the citizens of Lebanon. It also aimed to place Lebanon within the framework of professed regional integration, i.e., the Arab League—while the region was basically moving towards globalization, i.e., the post-Cold War trend of globalization that is notably based on democratization and economic liberalization as a result of technological, social, political and cultural change. When we mention cultural change, we cannot but draw attention to the cultural shock that acculturation, diffusion, accommodation, adaptation, and integration provoke. This lecturer considers that Arabism was never a bona fide ideology⁠, it was a troublesome ideology for the 20th century and is worthless in the 21st Century global world. Thus, the lecturer has the right to inquire: ‘why is Arabism the only National identity stated in the Lebanese Constitution? What about the Lebanese nationality of the non-Arab Lebanese, e.g., Armenians, Greeks, Syriacs, Assyrians, etc.? What are the pure Arab culture traits in Lebanon? What can a regional Arabism offer the global community? What kind of relationships should Lebanon maintain with the Western World? Is not it strange that some Lebanese still fear westernization and resist integration into the 21st century globalization? What about those Lebanese who have adopted Far Eastern Religions and ideologies? Are they still Arabs?’ In simple words, the Lebanese has to go out of the Arab cave into the global society, which is based on diversity, democracy and liberal economy. Friedman correctly put it in his latest

1. It is important to mention that the rise of Arab nationalism goes back only to the 19th century when a few Syrian Christians “who shared the general ideas of modernists advanced a quasi-secular Arab nationalism.” It was an attempt of liberation from the rigid Ottomanism. As a reaction to this movement, “the Muslim Arabs considered that Arabic shall not be Christianized.” (Dawn, 1993, p. 381)
book *The World is Flat*, "if you are not a democracy or a democratizing society, if you continued to hold fast to highly regulated or centrally planned economics, you were seen as being on the wrong side of history" (2005, p. 49). Nowadays, many countries and regimes in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa are striving to become modernized if not westernized. They strive to introduce western systems of communication and media, government and rule, weaponry, enterprises and businesses, schooling and higher education, music, food, clothing, etc. Friedman discussed the impact of the different forces that flattened the world; among others he mentioned the fall of the Berlin Wall, IBM PCs and Windows, Netscape, the Y2K project, the e-commerce, the WTO, the Sushi food, UPS, Google, Yahoo!, MSN Web Search, and finally, the digital, mobile, personal, and virtual high-tech. (2005, pp. 48-172)

At this point, the lecturer will permit himself the question of whether God intervenes in history and why God has allowed such events to happen to his followers (and who are his true followers!) What about Lebanon, the country of God’s cedars? First, it is to be emphasized that Christianity and Islam do not have a homogeneous reading of a number of issues, e.g., their concept of God, God’s intervention in history, religion and the state, human rights, government, war and peace, etc. Moreover, Biblical Christianity does not call for a Christian state. It contends that physical warfare belongs to the province of the state, not of the church. Moreover, extending Christ’s kingdom by military means is clearly not part of the ideal of the New Testament. Thus, any war waged in the name of Christ since the rise of the first Christian state until now is believed by the lecturer to be anti-biblical and contrary to the ‘pacifist’ teaching of Christ, who said, "For all who take the sword will perish by the sword." [Mt. 26:52, ESV] On the other hand, Quranic Islam differs on these issues. It connects

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1. Jesus refused to be an earthy king and to establish an earthly kingdom. On the contrary, he articulated his principle against war when he stood before Pilate and said, "My kingdom is not of this world." [Jn. 18: 36, ESV] Moreover, he challenged his followers when he said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." [Mt. 5: 43-45, ESV] The Christian Church, the community of the new Israel, was basically different from Old Testament Israel. "The latter was a national structure, a political organism, and was, therefore, by its nature thrust into war. The Church was an international and intercultural body, and was by this fact delivered from engagement in warfare as a church... Consequently, the New Testament writers reinterpret the holy war in a spiritual way [1 Cor. 14:8; 2 Cor. 10:3; 1 Tim. 1:18-19]. The Church’s struggle is not against human beings but against the demonic powers ruling a disordered cosmos [Eph. 6:10-12], and its weapons are entirely of the spiritual kind, to be used against the powers of evil, not against human enemies [2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:13-17]." (Toombs, 1993, 801)
religion and the state. Several battles were waged by the Prophet Muhammad himself in order to expand Islam. The Hijra, literally the migration, is regarded by Muslims as the “decisive moment in Muhammad’s apostolate.... In Mecca, Muhammad had been a private individual struggling against first the indifference and then the hostility of the rulers of the place. In Medina he himself became ruler, wielding political and military as well as religious authority.” (Lewis, 1997, p. 53)

Christianity and Islam encountered each other in all the Eastern Roman regions that were occupied by Muslims during Islamic conquest in the 7th Century. Since then, Christians of the Middle East have lived in ‘Dhimmitude’. According to Cragg, “Dhimmi status required that the churches become private to themselves, subject to steady decrease in numbers, and confined to their own kind. In that status were several factors making either for a polemical or a ghetto frame of mind, inhibited from any lively will to communicate and interpret.” (1992, p. 71) Within this framework of Dhimmitude, Christian religious leaders exercised massive political and social authority within their communities. They represented their communities before the supreme political authority, a status that carried over into the ‘secular’ government of new Middle Eastern states when these states received their independence in the wake of the Ottoman collapse and the Mandate era. (Betts, 1978, p. 142) When we say political, we mean that they had to use their moral authority to see that their followers accepted the Muslim ruler’s power and abstained from disorder, but not to say that they could influence the decisions of those rulers. Finally, this Dhimmitude might be abolished if Christians (leaders and followers, political and religious), could benefit from the changes provoked by Western pressure on the regimes in the Middle East in an effort to make them more democratic and free. Finally, Christians should always remember four essential things, 1) that Christ’s kingdom is not of this world [Jn. 18: 36] although “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” [Ps 24:1]; 2) that they must be all one in Christ Jesus [Gal. 3: 28]; 3) that their Church (churches) is universal; and 4) that their ecclesiastical culture is Greco-Roman and not Arab.

2. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

When someone brings up the topic of ethics, many consider this attempt as preaching. This view is not correct. Ethics\(^1\) comes from the Greek (ethos \(\Theta\)\(\Theta\\)\(\Theta\)\(\Sigma\))

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1. Many philosophers like to distinguish ethics from morality, the two words, however, are commonly used interchangeably. In their view, ‘morality’ refers to human conduct and values, and ‘ethics’ refers to the study of those areas (it denotes an academic subject).
meaning ‘character / custom’. Simply put, ethics involves learning what is right or wrong, and then doing the right thing. Thus, ethics as a philosophical study becomes both theoretical and practical. Unfortunately, there are often differences as to what constitutes ethical behavior. Singer (1993) correctly explains what not ethics is. “First, ethics is not a set of prohibitions particularly concerned with sex. Second, ethics is not an ideal system that is noble in theory but no good in practice. Third, ethics is not something intelligible only in the context of religion. Fourth, ethics is not always relative or subjective.” (pp. 1-4)

Some people think that the concern with ethics is now out of date. Others consider that concern as irrelevant because it belongs to the ‘world of values’, whereas reality belongs to the ‘world of facts’. This approach has its roots in the Sophists’ understanding of ethics in Ancient Greece. They held that there is a radical distinction between nature [fysis ΦΥΣΙΣ] and convention [nomos ΝΟΜΟΣ] (Maclyntyre, 1998, p. 16). For them, “ethical argument is a matter of rhetoric, which is to say, of persuading people to believe what you believe rather than proving to them that the beliefs you hold are true.” Philosophers have been discussing the objectivity of morality for at least 2500 years since the time of Plato and Socrates, “who believed that good and bad, right and wrong, are part of the objective nature of things.” (Graham, 2004, pp. 1-2) In fact, moral concepts change as social life is modified in times of fundamental change. However, this does not mean that there is no single set of absolute values that are essential to every system of ethics or that all values are relative to a particular society of people.

The literature on Ethics in the West has registered several ethical offences reflected in both international and national environments, i.e., political, governmental/regulatory, demographic and social, technological, legal, and economic (Weiss, 1998, p. 3). The list of offences is long. It includes injustice, discrimination, conflicts of interest, bribery, sexual harassment, coercion, stealing, forgery, plagiarism, violation of privacy, theft of trade secrets, whistleblowing, killing, abortion, euthanasia, death penalty, lying, etc.

Ethics should be at the heart of decision-making. There are several theories of ethics that may shape our decisions: egoism, altruism, self-relativism, hedonism, naturalism and virtue theory, existentialism, contractualism, Kantianism (universalizability), utilitarianism, and religion (see Graham, 2004). Usually, ethicists concentrate their analysis on the deontological universalizability and the teleological utilitarianism. Universalizability states that any course of action that cannot be universally adopted must be morally
impermissible; to this category belong many religious laws, e.g., the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20: 1-17), the golden rule of Christ\textsuperscript{1} “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” [Mt. 7: 12; ESV]; etc. On the other hand, Utilitarianism denotes that the greatest happiness of the greatest number should be the criterion of the virtue of action.

The application of ethics in many professions, mainly in the West, is simply the reflection of the teachings of many ethical norms found in sacred books, e.g., the Bible; in ancient philosophers’ works; in modern philosophers’ works; in Roman Catholic Popes’ encyclicals; in the Declaration toward a Global Ethic of the Parliament of the World’s Religions (1993); in the UN Universal Declaration of Human rights (1948); in the US Civil Rights Act (1964); and in the Earth Charter of the Earth Council (2002). History has witnessed several attempts to observe ethical standards in every profession. For instance, Hippocrates’ corpus of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century BC became the standard against which doctors continue to measure themselves. Nowadays, many guilds and associations in the West are trying to compose professional codes of ethics or codes of conduct and to manage ethics in their workplaces. Weiss (1998) points out a number of potential benefits of managing ethics in the workplace: first, to help maintain a moral course in turbulent times; second, to cultivate teamwork and productivity; and third, to promote a strong public image. Ethical education and training can be useful for developing a broader awareness of the motivations for and consequences of our decisions. It also improves the moral climate of organizations by enhancing moral awareness and sensitivity to moral issues and commitment to finding moral solutions. (pp. 20-22) It is to be noticed that while documents are the compass, the person’s will is the basis.

Well-known organizations in the West have already built their strong cultures. Culture, in general, “is the set of values, guiding beliefs, understandings, and way of thinking that is shared by members of an organization and taught to new members as correct.” (Daft, 2001, p. 116). Those strong cultures are mainly founded on ethical (e.g., integrity, trustworthiness, honesty, promise-keeping, etc.), quality (e.g., teamwork, communication, transparency and accountability, etc.), and civic virtue and citizenship values (e.g., community service, equity, equality, protection of environment, etc).

\textsuperscript{1} It is similar to the golden rule of Confucius “ Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you.” [Analects, 15, 23]
Organizational Culture serves two critical functions: first, to help organization members learn how to relate to one another (internal integration), and second, to help organizations cope with external problems (external integration). Thus, it is essential to diagnose organizational culture since both environments, internal and external, are changing fields. Smircich (1983) considered that culture presents a sense of identity among organization members. It also promotes the commitment of the members to something larger than self (to the organization). It furthermore sustains the stability of the organizational social system. Finally, it provides rationale and direction of behavior. (Friedtsche, 1997, p. 94)

3. THE PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL LEADERS

It is essential at this stage to define leadership. Kotter stated that leadership is about "coping with change" by aligning people and achieving a vision. "It has nothing to do with having 'charisma' or other exotic personality traits." (1990, pp. 40-41) Furthermore, Senge et al. view, "leadership as the capacity of a human community to shape its future, and specifically to sustain the significant processes of change required doing so." (2005, p. 16). Moreover, Tom Peters, the most influential business thinker of our age, proposes the most important premises for leaders¹, premises that are not new to biblical literature². Jesus Christ is our role model. He created a new future for his followers [Mt 9:9]. He showed passion for his mission and its purpose and his people [Lk 15:10]. He trained a staff of twelve disciples who went and influenced the whole world in spite of illiteracy, questionable backgrounds, irritable feelings, and momentary cowardice. He was a good listener [Lk 2:46]. He said the truth [Jn 1:14, 17; 8:32]. He demonstrated genuine care for his people [Lk 4:18]. He influenced the thoughts and actions of other people [Mt. 7:28]. He found time for individuals [Jn 4: 7-28]. He encouraged his people to risk and to challenge the status quo [Mt 15:2]. He honored the importance of balance [Mk 7: 5-13]. He had his eye on the horizon [Mt 10:34]. He created a culture of leadership [Mt. 28:19-20].

Modern literature about leadership refutes several myths that usually prevent qualified people from rising to the top. Among them are: "leadership is a rare ability only given to a few;" "Leaders are born and not made;" "Leaders are charismatic;" "The person with the title, most rank or the highest position is the

¹. Peters, 2005, pp. 15-62
². See Maxwell (2000) who illustrated leadership principles modeled by characters in the Bible.
leader;” “Those who are not in top management positions are not leaders;” “Effective leadership is based on control, coercion, and manipulation.”

Leadership and followership are interrelated; leaders as well as followers are accountable for what they do. Kellerman (2004) considered that there is no leadership without followership. “Leaders cannot lead unless followers follow, passively or actively” (p. xiv). When it comes to bad leaders, she considered that “we cannot expect to reduce their number unless we reduce the number of bad followers.” (p. 21) Moreover, ethical leadership and efficiency are interconnected. She considered that bad leadership falls into two categories: bad as ineffective (i.e., incompetent, rigid, and intemperate) and bad as unethical (i.e., callous, corrupt, insular, and evil). (pp. 38-46)

In The heart of leadership (1998), Burns goes on to compare and contrast between ethical and unethical leaders: 1) “ethical leaders put their followers’ needs before their own. Unethical leaders do not;” 2) “ethical leaders exemplify private virtues such as courage and temperance. Unethical leaders do not;” and 3) “ethical leaders exercise leadership in the interest of the common good. Unethical leaders do not.” (Kellerman, 2004, p. 35)

In this context, it is significant to understand why the Cedars Revolution and the Spirit of March 14 in Lebanon didn’t last. To that end, we have to review Kotter’s remarks on why transformation efforts fail. He listed 8 errors that are applicable to the Lebanese case: 1) Not establishing a great enough sense of urgency; 2) not creating a powerful enough guiding coalition; 3) lacking a vision; 4) under-communicating the vision; 5) not removing obstacles to the new vision; 6) not systematically planning for and creating short-term wins; 7) declaring victory too soon; and 8) not anchoring changes in the corporation’s (country’s) culture. (1995, pp. 2-20)

1. “The leader and at least some followers lack the will of skill (or both) to sustain effective action.” (Kellerman, 2004, p. 40)
2. “The leader and at least some followers are still and unyielding.” (Kellerman, 2004, p. 41)
3. “The leader lacks self-control and is aided and abetted by followers who are unwilling or unable effectively to intervene.” (Kellerman, 2004, p. 42)
4. “The leader and at least some followers are uncaring or unkind.” (Kellerman, 2004, p. 43)
5. “The leader and at least some followers lie, cheat, or steal.” (Kellerman, 2004, p. 44)
6. “The leader and at least some followers minimize or disregard the health and welfare of the other.” (Kellerman, 2004, p. 45)
CONCLUSION

Needless to say reform requires strong leadership. Strong leaders of all kinds (i.e., individuals, groups, institutions, and countries) or disciplines (e.g., politics, religion, business, armed forces, education, high-tech, etc.) are emotional magnets and role models. Their genius, talents and developed skills motivate and inspire their followers and create precedents. They also understand the importance of change and thus provoke reform within their societies. They have clear vision, applicable strategy, profound knowledge, skilled human capital, and well-designed programs and projects pertaining to change, assessment and development. Strong leadership can be ethical or unethical vis-à-vis the school of thought (e.g., Universalizability or Utilitarianism) a leader adopts. Ethical leaders produce and implement constructive changes. They lead people in the right direction, right down the first time. They neither manipulate nor follow devious or dishonest tactics; instead, they lead by example. They support their followers; they motivate them by satisfying their basic human needs, and they enhance their self-esteem. On the other hand, leadership can be taught and developed; a learning leader can be a benchmark against the standards that some prominent leading individuals, groups, or institutions have developed and set, and certainly learned from assessment of their own strengths and weaknesses. Among the leaders who changed the course of history are Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad. Today, there are organizations, e.g., the UN, and networks, e.g., those provided by modern technology, those are changing the world. It is important to note that leadership development is not limited to knowledge, skills, and techniques. It must be fundamentally based on ethics, dignity, integrity, and trust that form the cornerstone of teamwork, recognition, and communication. Thus, laying down the basic traits of ethical leadership within the sociopolitical scene of Lebanon might help us find the answer to what an ethical leader can do in a turbulent Lebanon!
LIST OF REFERENCES


