

Leadership and Subordination: An Islamic Perspective

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Abū Ja'far al Manṣūr, the founder of the 'Abbāsīd state, once posed a question to some of his confidants:

Who is the hawk of Quraysh? They replied: The Commander of the Faithful (Amīr al Mu'minīn) who established the reign, quieted upheavals, and extinguished ordeals. He said: You have not answered my question. They said: Is it Mu'āwiyah? He said: No. They said: Is it 'Abd al Mālik ibn Marwān? He said: No. They said: Who else, O Commander of the Faithful? He said: 'Abd al Raḥmān ibn Mu'āwiyah, who escaped by his cunning the spearheads of the lances and the blades of the swords, travelling the desert, and sailing the seas, until he entered an alien territory. [There] he organized cities, mobilized armies, and reestablished his reign after it was completely lost, by good management and strong resolve. Mu'āwiyah rose to his stature through the support of 'Umar and 'Uthmān, whose backing allowed him to overcome difficulties; 'Abd al Mālik, because of previous appointment; and the Commander of the Faithful through the struggle of his kin and the solidarity of his partisans. But 'Abd al Raḥmān did it alone, with the support of none other than his own judgement, depending on no one but his own resolve. (Ibn al Athīr, 5:182)

Identifying leadership and determining its qualities and contributions to collective life is an ancient concern of people. Abū Ja'far al Manṣūr, an eminent Muslim leader in his own right, raised the question in a peculiar

yet practical way. By asking his companions to identify the “hawk of Quraysh,” he was asking them to name the foremost leader of a leading Arab tribe. For the desert Arabs, the hawk was an exotic animal and a superior bird known for its sharp vision, precision, and swiftness. Similarly, the Quraysh was a leading tribe and a tribe of leaders both before and after the advent of Islam. The names suggested by al Manṣūr’s companions, as well as the one he proposed, are those of the founders of three powerful Islamic states: Mu‘āwiyah (the founder of the ‘Umayyad state), ‘Abd al Mālīk (the second founder of the ‘Umayyad state after its eclipse during the reign of Mu‘āwiyah’s grandson), al Manṣūr (who established the ‘Abbāsīd state along with his brother ‘Abd Allāh al Saffāh), and finally, ‘Abd al Raḥmān (who reestablished the ‘Umayyad rule in Muslim Spain [Andalusia] after he was forced to flee the Muslim east due to the successful ‘Abbāsīd revolt).

To al Manṣūr, the “hawk of Quraysh,” the leader of the tribe that had produced many outstanding leaders over the years, was none other than ‘Abd al Raḥmān ibn Mu‘āwiyah, also known as ‘Abd al Raḥmān al Dakhīl, who united the warring Muslim factions in Spain and thereby reaffirmed ‘Umayyad rule in the Muslim west after it had been lost in the Muslim east. As al Manṣūr himself explained, his selection of ‘Abd al Raḥmān as the foremost leader and statesman of the Quraysh had to do with the latter’s ability to ascend to the position of authority by relying on his personal qualities rather than on structural and procedural factors. For, as al Manṣūr pointed out, among the candidates to the title the “hawk of Quraysh,” only ‘Abd al Raḥmān lacked institutional support. He was not nominated to the office he later occupied by established leaders, as was Mu‘awiyah; he did not inherit his office from a predecessor in accordance with a hereditary principle, as did ‘Abd al Malik; and he did not receive the support of a large and well-organized movement, as did al Manṣūr.

For al Manṣūr, ‘Abd al Raḥmān provided an unequivocal example of true leadership, for his rise to leadership was not the result of occupying a position with recognized authority, but rather was based on personal qualities and leadership abilities. As al Manṣūr put it, ‘Abd al Raḥmān’s leadership rested on his “good management and strong resolve.” While personal qualities and managerial skills are not the only factors that contribute to the emergence of effective leaders (a point that will be discussed at length later), al Manṣūr’s argument underscores brilliantly the fact that leadership, as a social phenomenon, is quite independent from any position or office associated with the exercise of authority. To understand leadership, therefore, one has to study it in its own right and apart from the rights and obligations attached to formal positions of authority.

In the remainder of this paper, we will identify the essential qualities of leadership, first by examining the Qur’anic account of the traits of the most influential leaders in history, namely, the prophets who were entrusted

ed with the responsibility of reforming the deteriorated conditions of their communities. We then relate the qualities identified through this examination to the task performed by leaders. We conclude by discussing briefly the moral dilemma faced by leaders that result from the occasional clash between two sets of demands: those conforming to the directives of superiors on the one hand and those taking initiative and providing direction to subordinates on the other.

Leadership Defined

If leadership is independent of formal positions and offices, how are we to perceive it? Contemporary students of leadership offer definitions with varying emphasis. For instance, it has been defined in relation to the task of initiating and maintaining a definitive organizational structure. Thus Stogdill defines leadership as "the initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction."¹ Others have equated it with communication skills and information management by defining it as "an interaction between persons in which one presents information of a sort and in such manner that the other becomes convinced that his outcomes (benefits/costs ratio) will be improved if he behaves in the manner suggested or desired."² Still others link it with power relations by insisting that leadership is "a particular type of power relationship characterized by a group member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behavior patterns for the former regarding his activities as a group member."³

While developing organizational structure, communication, and exercising authority are intrinsic aspects of leadership, identifying leadership with one of its various aspects only hinders our ability to understand the full scope of its impact and significance. We therefore prefer to define leadership as "the capacity to mobilize a group of people towards a set of articulated goals, and to ensure their continuous cooperation for the realization of these goals." This definition is broad enough to encompass the various aspects of leadership and also specific enough to identify the combination of elements necessary for the emergence of leadership.

According to the above definition leadership is perceived, first of all, in relation to the leader's personal qualities and skills. An individual's capacity to lead should not, however, be conceived in a vacuum but in connection with the common activities of a specific group of people sharing common aspirations and goals. Second, it underscores the need to understand the act of leadership in connection with a specific group of people who are receptive to the leader's directives. In other words, understanding leadership requires that one examine the attitudes of the group members towards their leaders and explore the source of receptiveness to leadership among group members. Since no leader can emerge without followers, understanding the nature and source of sub-

ordination is essential for studying leadership. Third, the definition suggests that the presence of common goals is fundamental for the emergence of leadership. Indeed, a commonality of goals is necessary both for the formation of the group itself as well as for the cooperation of its members. Quite often, leadership emerges in the process of articulating a set of goals and persuading others to commit themselves to achieving them.

In addition, goals serve as indicators by which leadership effectiveness can be measured, for while all leaders must be able to articulate a set of goals and mobilize their people to work towards their achievement, not all leaders can succeed in leading their people towards the realization of the established goals. It is true that the group's failure to achieve its desired goals is a complicated issue and hence cannot always be blamed on the act of leadership itself. Still, most people seem to be interested in and to admire effective leaders. In fact, the four candidates for the title of the "hawk of Quraysh" represent cases of triumphant and successful leaders.

Leadership Traits

The first element of leadership relates to the leader's personal qualities and traits. The most direct way to identify leadership qualities is to study the personality traits of recognized leaders. This is also the easiest way, since our history books are filled with lists that describe the traits of leaders with various causes and abilities. One of the most elaborate and detailed accounts of leadership traits is that of 'Abd al Raḥmān al Dakhil, the "hawk of Quraysh." The Andalusian historian Ibn Hibbān described this man's character in the following terms. " 'Abd al Raḥmān," he wrote,

was overtly forbearing, vastly knowledgeable, and sharply insightful, possessed swift decisiveness and strong resolve. [He was] far from inaction, an expeditious and hardworking person who neither enjoyed tranquillity nor got satisfaction in indolence. [Hence,] he would not leave the [handling of] affairs to others, yet he would not singlehandedly dispose of them on the basis of his individual opinion. [He was] courageous and brave, with depth and breadth. [He had moments] of fury, and very few [moments] of serenity. [He was] articulate and eloquent; poetic, a perfectionist and easygoing, generous and outspoken. He used to attend funerals and pray for the deceased. He used to lead congregations whenever he was present at Friday and 'īd prayers and to deliver the *khutbah* at the *minbar*. [He used] to visit the sick, and come out to meet [ordinary] people and walk in public.⁴

The above description of 'Abd al Raḥmān provides us with a list of the following traits: forbearance, intelligence, resolve, diligence, courage, eloquence, generosity, leniency, fury, and restlessness. With the exception of the last two, these personality traits seem to be shared by many of those who may be described as distinguished leaders, beginning with the most important model of leadership provided by the prophets. While the above list is far from comprehensive or complete, it includes some essential leadership qualities. In the remainder of this section, we will identify some of the most essential personal qualities of leaders. In so doing, we specifically trace the moral qualities that the Qur'an associates with the role of leadership.

Patience (Ṣabr). A quick survey of Islamic literature shows that no virtue has more affinity with leadership than patience. The Qur'an emphasizes repeatedly the importance of patience for believers in general and for leaders in particular and identifies it as one of two essential qualities of leadership, the other being conviction (*yaqīn*):

And We made, from among them, leaders (*a'immah*), giving guidance under Our command, so long as they displayed patience (*sabr*), and continued to demonstrate faith (*yaqīn*) in our signs. (Qur'an 32:23)

As a general quality, patience is manifested in one's endurance in the face of pain and suffering or constant annoyance. The term itself signifies, more often than not, calm endurance in the face of pain and suffering caused by such natural disasters (divine acts) as diseases, famines, floods, or earthquakes, all of which lead to a loss of life and property. As such, patience is manifested in the believer's calm endurance of the trials of life:

Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere. (Qur'an 2:155)

However, when the source of pain and suffering is human instead of divine, the Qur'anic terms for conveying the meaning of calm endurance are resolve (*'azm*) and forbearance (*ḥilm*). Resolve denotes perseverance when confronted with superior human power. A resolute person, therefore, continues to pursue his/her objectives despite the strong opposition of those who have the power to inflict pain and suffering. This was the kind of patience with which prophets persisted in their mission of transforming their communities from the state of corruption to that of truth:

Therefore patiently persevere, as did the resolute among the prophets, and be in no haste with them (the unbelievers). (Qur'an 46:35)

Forbearance, on the other hand, refers to one's ability to endure annoyance and irritation even when one has the upper hand over those responsible for producing them:

For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing, compassionate, and given to look to Allah. (Qur'an 11:75)

And as the hadith stresses:

The strong among you is not the one who can overpower others, but the one who can control himself in the moment of anger. (Muslim)

Resolve and forbearance are important qualities for effective leadership. The former is essential for overcoming adversaries, and the latter for maintaining unity and solidarity between leaders and followers.

Knowledge ('Ilm): Leaders are expected to be knowledgeable and well informed. They are not to be functioning members of their communities alone, but to acquire the necessary specialized knowledge and insight in the areas in which they exercise leadership. Those who assume leadership responsibilities in political, economic, intellectual, legal, educational, or military fields of endeavor must acquire the necessary specialized knowledge and expertise. A leader of a commercial firm, for example, should have a general knowledge about his/her social and political environments, but he/she also must have mastery over the specifics of his/her trade. It was Yūsuf's (Joseph's) knowledge that gave him the confidence to step forward and ask Pharaoh to appoint him as treasurer of the realm:

[Yūsuf] said: Set me over the storehouses of the land: I will indeed guard them, as one that knows. (Qur'an 12:55)

Ultimately, however, it is not one's scope of pure knowledge (*'ilm*) that matters in the exercise of leadership, but one's ability to apply the knowledge obtained to practical situations—one's wisdom (*ḥikmah*). While *'ilm* and *ḥikmah* are closely interrelated, they have slightly different connotations. The term "knowledge" denotes the various ideas one receives about the nature of reality, whereas the terms "wisdom" or "judgment" (*ḥukm*) signify the way by which knowledge is brought to bear on action (*fi'l*). More specifically, as is evident in *Sūrah al Isrā'* and *Sūrah Luqmān*, wisdom consists in those principles that guide actions. In *al Isrā'*, for instance, wisdom is used in reference to such precepts as "fulfil every engagement" or "pursue not that of which you have no knowledge." It is for this reason that wisdom receives special emphasis in the Qur'an, where it is made abundantly clear that wisdom is a source of blessing and goodness to those who possess it:

He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and he to whom wisdom is granted receives indeed a benefit overwhelming. But none will grasp the message but men of understanding. (Qur'an 2:269)

It is also emphasized that wisdom has been an essential quality of prophets:

O Yaḥyā! Take hold of the book with might: and We gave him wisdom even as a youth. (Qur'an 19:12)

When he [Mūsa] reached full age, and was firmly established (in life), We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge: for thus We reward those who do good. (Qur'an 28:14)

And We strengthened his [Dāwūd's] kingdom, and gave him wisdom and sound judgment in speech and decision. (Qur'an 38:20)

In short, leaders must be intellectual and perceptive, capable of analyzing the overall situation, establishing priorities for action, and developing strategies for their implementation.

Eloquence (Faṣāḥah): Another important quality of leadership is the ability to articulate ideas and views with clarity and eloquence. Eloquence is important not only for persuading followers to adopt the proposed course of action and committing themselves to a specific set of values and purposes, but also to negotiating and communicating with opponents and competitors. Again, the Qur'an stresses the importance of eloquence through the example of Mūsā (Moses) whose initial reaction, when he received the divine commission to call Pharaoh to the way of God, was to plead for the inclusion of his brother Hārūn (Aaron) in this mission based on the fact that:

My brother Hārūn is more eloquent in speech than I: so send him with me as a helper, to confirm (and strengthen) me: For I fear that they may accuse me of falsehood. (Qur'an 28:34)

Enterprise (Iqdām): One of the qualities that distinguish leaders from others is their enterprise. This trait reveals itself through the initiatives taken by a leader in his/her drive to carry out his/her mission. The leader's enterprise is usually manifested by self-confidence, boldness, and willingness to take risk whenever necessary, as well as by personal energy, diligence, and hard work. The Qur'anic equivalence of the term "enterprise" is *al akhdh bi quwwah* (taking with might). This meaning can be found in Allah's injunction to Mūsā to take the divine mission with firmness and strength:

And We ordained laws for him [Mūsā] in the Tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things, (and said): Take

and hold these with strength and enjoin your people to hold fast to the best of the precepts. (Qur'an 7:145)

It is this attitude of "taking with might" that one sees in the boldness of the young Abraham when he stood firmly before the elders of his community and told them:

Fie upon you, and upon the things that you worship besides Allah!
Have you no sense? (Qur'an 12:67)

It is the same attitude observed in the energy exhibited by Nūḥ (Noah) as he pursued his mission with diligence and hard work, despite the negative response he received from his people:

He said: O my Lord! I have called to my people night and day, but my call only increased (their) flight (from truth) So I have called them aloud; further I have spoken to them in public and secretly in private. (Qur'an 71:5-6, 8-9)

The attitude of "taking with might" can also be seen in the bravery displayed by Mūsā as he stood before Pharaoh and demanded that the children of Israel be released from their servitude in Egypt. Responding to Pharaoh's showering his favors upon him when he was taken in as a member of the royal household, Mūsā said:

And this is the favor with which you do reproach me that you have enslaved the children of Israel. (Qur'an 26:22)

In this way, he reminded Pharaoh that his mother's decision to set her baby boy in the boat that took him, by divine design, to the royal palace where he was raised was precipitated by the servitude imposed by Pharaoh himself on Mūsā's people: the children of Israel.

The same attitude is revealed in the self-confidence shown by the Prophet when he stood on the mount of al Ṣafā and called his people to the way of God:

Tell me, O men of Quraysh, if I were to inform you that I see a cavalry on the other side of this mountain, would you believe me? They answered: Indeed, for we trust you and we have never known you to tell a lie. Muhammad said: Know then that I am a warner, and that I warn you of a severe punishment.⁵

Leniency (Lin): Self-confidence, boldness, and courage do not produce effective leadership if they are not balanced by kindness, courtesy, and leniency. The latter are the result of the leader's genuine concern for the well-being of subordinates and for those who come under his/her

responsibility and reflect an attitude of compassion and humility. It would be quite difficult for a leader who lacks this trait to keep people attracted to his/her message or interested in him/her for long. It was the Prophet's kindness and good manner that kept the believers attracted to him:

It is by the mercy of Allah that you have been lenient with them [the believers]. Were you severe or harsh hearted, they would have broken away from you: so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them, and consult them in (public) affairs. (Qur'an 3:159)

Conviction (Yaqīn): Conviction and patience are a leader's most important qualities, for the leader's conviction in his/her mission and purpose lies at the root of all other traits, including resolve and perseverance, knowledge and wisdom, enterprise and eloquence, leniency and forbearance. It is for this reason that the higher the leader's responsibilities and the more volatile the environment in which he/she operates, the more crucial is his/her personal conviction in his/her mission.

The importance of the leader's conviction in times of volatility and change is seen in the fact that when the existing order begins to break down, along with its rules and regulations, actions can be guided only by the principles and values to which one is committed. Thus a deep conviction in and a strong commitment to a set of principles or values are essential for a leader who wants to reform the accepted patterns of behavior. Again, the same conviction is needed if the leader is to challenge the status quo, for without a deep faith in a higher and better order, the task of changing the prevalent order is impossible.

Following in the footsteps of Weber, many western scholars of leadership recognize the significance of faith and conviction for reformist leadership and use the term "charisma" to mystify its spiritual origin. Weber himself, while studying charisma from a secularist point of view, was quite aware of its religious underpinning. In his words, "charisma" refers

to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to ordinary persons, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a "leader."⁶

Weber further attributed charisma to "magical powers, whether of prophets, persons with a reputation for therapeutic or legal wisdom, leaders in the hunt, or heroes in war."⁷ However, he refused to go any further in

determining the nature of charisma, arguing that such a determination is “entirely indifferent for purpose of definition.”⁸ While one should not underestimate the complexity of this concept, it is appropriate to stress here that the power and influence exercised by a charismatic leader are due, in the first place, to a deep personal conviction in a set of values and beliefs that he/she presents to the community in the form of a “vision”⁹ and then utilizes to inspire followers to overcome the problems and difficulties confronting them.

The Role of Leadership

Any attempt to understand leadership by focusing on leaders' traits alone is inadequate for gaining a deep insight into this phenomenon. This is because leadership is not simply a matter of individual traits, but rather is connected directly to one's ability to bring the right balance to the application of personal capacities to the task performed by the group, the prevailing values and norms among the leader's group, and the overall cultural and structural conditions. It is quite possible that a person could possess a combination of the leadership traits discussed above but still fail to exercise leadership within his/her community for several reasons: his/her qualities have not been brought to bear on the group's organizational activities, the incompatibility between his/her characteristics and those of the community, or even because the message advanced is deemed inappropriate by the organization.¹⁰ In this section, we will focus on the first aspect of leadership, which relates a leader's personal traits and their relation to the task or role he/she is expected to perform. A discussion of the other two elements will be found in a subsequent section.

In order to relate leadership qualities to the task of leadership, first of all we must identify those activities that are intrinsic to the act of leading. Leaders are usually involved in a variety of activities, such as directing, planning, negotiating, persuading, and evaluating. These may be subsumed under the following general categories: a) directing the organization's members, including setting goals and identifying major difficulties and obstacles lying in the way of achieving the desired goals. directing also involves developing strategies for pursuing established goals as well as elaborating solutions for overcoming existing problems; b) Mobilizing the resources required for achieving desired goals and developing the competency and skills of organization members; and c) integrating the various elements needed for the organization's continued existence and strengthening solidarity among its members.

In the next three sections, we explore the leader's task regarding each of the three sets of activities outlined above and examine the type of leadership qualities needed to undertake them. We also identify which qualities contribute to the fulfillment of the leadership role.

Direction (Vision)

The first, and probably most important, role leaders have to play is providing direction to their organization. Indeed the very notion of "leading" derives from one's ability to guide and direct the actions of others. To do so, one has to identify the specific goals that the group wants to realize and then develop the appropriate strategy to achieve them. Leaders should not, however, select goals and purposes at random or in an ad hoc fashion. Rather, goals and purposes must be part of a broad vision in order to inspire the commitment of organization members. The vision should consist of a) a set of clear goals and purposes, b) a general statement assessing the group's present state and describing the future state to be attained while pursuing the established goals, and c) a set of principles to guide the organization members' internal and external interaction.

The vision statement of the group could emerge out of the creative thinking of the leader or in the course of discussion and exchange of ideas and views among members. But in either case, a process of consultation and deliberation aiming at achieving consensus (*ijmā'*) through dialogue and persuasion must be put in place.

A well-developed and articulated vision statement: a) brings constancy to the leader's directives and stability to the organization; b) inspires and motivates members by relating their well-being and salvation to the organization's mission and activities; c) eliminates confusion and misunderstanding and facilitates cooperation among group members and between leaders and followers; and d) reduces any conflict that might result from the absence of common commitments and values among organization members.

In addition to providing direction to the group, the articulated vision serves as a frame of reference for problem-solving activities. Solving problems, a crucial aspect of leadership, is not simply a matter of reacting spontaneously to challenges and events in a piecemeal fashion. Rather, problems must be dealt with on the basis of an overall vision that allows the group to provide appropriate responses, whereby problems are neither exaggerated nor underestimated, and whereby the actions undertaken do not complicate the overall task but ease difficulties and facilitate progress towards the ultimate goal.

Leaders must, therefore, be conceptualists and "people of ideas." This is true regardless of whether the particular nature of the organization's task is military, business, political, or otherwise. Good military leaders have always been outstanding strategists, capable of surprising their enemies with new movements and maneuvers. Similarly, good business leaders are usually distinguished entrepreneurs who bring new ideas and methods of doing things to their organizations. Likewise, effective political leaders are those who generate new ideas to overcome persistent problems.

In order for leaders to direct the activities of subordinates, they should have adequate expertise and knowledge of the organization's task as well as a sound understanding of the environment in which they operate. It is true that leaders can always call on the expertise of advisers and assistants, but their ability to utilize the advice received hinges on their capacity to compare and evaluate the opinions provided by their assistants. To do this successfully, leaders must be well grounded in the task of their organizations and well informed about the internal and external work atmosphere. It would be impossible to judge the value of the advice received if they are completely dependent on the knowledge of others.

Being competent in the types of activities pursued by the organization does not mean that the leader should be submerged in technical and detailed decisions. While mid-level leaders are expected to provide technical guidance to their subordinates, high-ranking leaders should concentrate on strategic planning and fix their eyes on long-range goals. Top leaders should ensure that details are given adequate attention by their subordinates while avoiding getting distracted by involving themselves in detailed decisions.

Leaders' responsibilities do not end at planning and making decisions, for they also have to implement plans and execute decisions. The latter requires a deep conviction in one's mission and a great deal of resolve to pursue it despite all difficulties. The profundity of a leader's conviction is often revealed in the firmness displayed in the face of opposition and resistance to his/her plans. It was Abū Bakr's strong belief that his mission was to reinforce and sustain the political order established by the Prophet that gave him the strength to stand firmly behind his decision to fight the apostates. While his firmness was seen by many of his contemporaries as unnecessary, we can see today with hindsight how crucial this firmness was for the future of the rising Islamic movement.

One final aspect of the leader's role as a source of diction to be emphasized relates to their qualities of courage and taking risks, for one important dimension of effective leadership is that true leaders always strive to promote and improve prevailing conditions and are not afraid to challenge the status quo. This explains why leaders are most needed in times of crisis and turbulence, when the impetus for change is quite great. In ordinary times when societal institutions are functional, society can continue to function even in the absence of strong leadership, for many of the emerging problems can be solved by established procedures and rules. But as institutions begin to experience dysfunction, strong leadership becomes indispensable.

Mobilization

The second task of leaders is to communicate their vision to others in ways designed to generate the strong commitment needed to serve as a

support to achieve the desired goals. In mobilizing the resources needed to achieve the organization's goals, the first responsibility leaders have is to persuade the organization's members to commit themselves to the proposed vision.

Persuasion should take place on different levels and through various mechanisms. For this reason, leaders should be good public speakers who can speak with zeal and clarity and convey their message to different groups of people via language that can be understood easily by a variety of audiences. Muḥammad ibn al Ḥasan al Murāḍī (d. 489 A.H.) emphasized in his *al Iṣharāh fī Tadbīr al 'Imārah*, which was written at the request of the Murābiṭūn leader Yaḥyā ibn 'Umar, the importance of the leader gearing the language to be used to the audience's intellectual level. Instructing Yaḥyā on the manner of effective communication, he wrote:

Your speech should be clear, intelligible, and succinct to the people of stature, elaborate to simple-minded people, and in between to the moderate. Every uttered word should have some utility and should contain some benefit. [Further,] your voice should neither be loud nor faint, but moderate in expressing the successive letters. You should [also] avoid both vulgar terms which are overused by commoners, as well as unfamiliar jargon which is distasteful even to the educated.¹¹

The statements of effective leaders should not only be convincing, but moving and inspiring as well. These leaders usually combine eloquence and skilful use of words with passion and sentimental expression throughout their message and thus touch the hearts of their audience and inspire their imagination. The inspiration emanating from effective leaders does not come merely from the tone of their message, but also from its content as well. Their message is challenging, inspires people to exert themselves, and calls upon them to strive towards higher grounds.

In their attempt to motivate their followers to undertake the proposed mission, effective leaders manage to address the latter's various interests and concerns and to inspire people with different motives and needs. A good example of such a technique can be found in the speech delivered by Khālid ibn al Waḥid to his army before a decisive battle with the Persians. Realizing that people are motivated by both spiritual and material needs, he impressed upon his soldiers that their triumph over the enemies could be not only a passway to attaining the pleasure of God by fulfilling their obligations towards Him, but one that could bring great improvements in their material conditions:

Do you not see that food is as plenty [here] as the soil; by Allah if we did not have to fight for meeting the requirements of jihad and for calling to the way of Allah, but only for acquiring livelihood,

sound judgement dictates that we should strive to take these territories over, and to leave hunger to whoever chose to sit still.¹²

Communication should not, however, be limited to public speeches, and leaders should not rely exclusively on writing memoranda and issuing directives, for such a situation would produce an impersonal and one-sided communication. Public talks and written instructions are not conducive to creating a close and personal interaction between leaders and followers, since these forms of communication make it possible for leaders to ignore or remain unaware of the views of their subordinates and incorporate them into their plans and decisions and makes it impossible for them to respond to their grievances and concerns. It is incumbent on leaders, therefore, to mingle with followers, subordinates, and those who stand on the receiving end of the organization's services.

While communication skills and the leader's ability to put forth a powerful and moving message is very crucial for motivating followers, their mobilization cannot be achieved merely by oratorical skills. Leaders must present an example of exemplary behavior to their followers. They must uphold their vision through their actions and maintain unwavering commitment to the principles and values they promote. A superior who asks his subordinates to sacrifice time or money while exempting himself/herself cannot lay any claim to leadership.

Mobilization does not end with inspiring and moving people, but naturally includes channelling their energies and utilizing their skills. Leaders are expected to empower their subordinates by assigning responsibilities and delegating to them enough power to allow them to execute those responsibilities successfully. Leaders who neglect to delegate authority to subordinates are guilty of not only failing to utilize available resources and skills, but of undermining their organizations, for giving subordinates the opportunity to face problems and difficulties and to learn how to overcome them is an important aspect of developing their skills and capabilities.

Despite the fact that people who occupy leading positions in an organization tend to be more experienced, and hence better decision makers than their subordinates, any attempt on their part to monopolize power and decision making can only lead to a lower level of efficiency. If they try to speed up work, they become susceptible to making frequent mistakes because they are forced to make hasty decisions. If they try to deliberate and do a more thorough job in studying issues and examining consequences, important decisions are delayed and the opportunity to take decisive actions are lost.

The leader who wants to empower others must be generous, humble, and people oriented, genuinely concerned about the well-being and development of subordinates. A self-centered, power hungry, or envious individual is not capable of true leadership, because he/she is interested mainly in the aggrandizement of personal power and not the development of others.

Finally, mobilizing a community behind a new vision requires a great deal of determination, patience, and perseverance. The leader's patience is crucial for overcoming the group's inertia and resistance to change, and the greatest resistance to change should be expected from those who control the power centers of the organization. Leaders who are not prepared to persevere and to hold their ground in the face of stiff resistance will fail to implement their vision, no matter how brilliant it is.

Integration

The task of leading does not end with mobilizing group members to pursue a vision and inspiring followers to strive for a common cause, but extends to maintaining the unity of their organizations and the momentum of their progress. Indeed, the acid test of leadership lies in its ability to ensure solidarity and cooperation among followers and to keep the momentum going. For unity and solidarity to be maintained, a culture of devotion, satisfaction, and trust must be created. This requires that special attention be given to communication. Good leaders are usually good communicators who know when to talk and when to listen and who ensure the flow of opinions and information throughout the organization.

Nothing could be more damaging to an organization than to prevent an adequate flow of information or to suppress discussion and the exchange of ideas and views. Without an honest and open discussion and exchange of views between superiors and subordinates within the organization, many of the positions taken and the views developed would be based on rumor and speculation, and an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust would take over. To develop trust, leaders must keep their followers informed about the nature of the decisions made and the reasons for making them. Whenever possible, followers should be consulted on important issues and encouraged to participate in the analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation of important policies. Al Murāḍī enumerates four reasons for a leader to engage subordinates in decisions:

First, the inadequacy of the knowledge available to the one seeking counsel for making a decision. Second, his fear of committing mistakes in assessing (the situation) even when he is not lacking (in knowledge). Third, the possibility that despite his intelligence and skills, the (emotions of) love and hate could prevent him from making the right decision. . . . And fourthly, *when the person consulted is partner or supporter in an action, his engagement in the decision would encourage him to render his utmost effort and support, because the action reflects his choice.*¹³
[emphasis mine]

As al Murāḍī points out, the commitment of the group members to their organization's objectives and goals can be enhanced greatly when decisions reflect their consensus. For this reason, the group's overall unity and harmony should be postdiscursive—a harmony obtained through discussion and exchange of views with the intent of achieving consensus. Only consensual harmony should be sought, because it is harmony based on a shared vision and strong commitment. Prediscursive harmony resulting from a suppression of discussion and questioning may ensure short-term peace within the group but would lead inevitably either to stagnation, as the decisions made by the leadership are deprived of the insight of others and as initiative would be suppressed, or to sudden disintegration when the level of uncommunicated discontent reaches the level of crisis.

Leaders must encourage two-way communication, which ensures a steady flow of information from top to bottom, and listen to their followers' views, ideas, and complaints. To do this, they should not rely on public speaking and discussion alone, but should utilize one-on-one communication with subordinates at all organizational levels. An effective leader has to be easygoing and possess a healthy sense of humility so as to have a genuine desire to listen to others' views. In addition, he/she should have a sense of humor in order to overcome the barrier of distance and hierarchy. To have genuine communication, it is not enough for the leader to have an occasional discussion with those who stand on the receiving end of the line of command. Rather, he/she must be able to break the ice and convey a sense of genuine interest in the people and, through the right attitude and gestures, stimulate a sense of security and togetherness so that the climate is set for an honest and candid expression of opinions.

The importance of honesty and openness in communication may be illustrated in the following exchange between Abū Bakr and Khālid ibn al Waḥid. Receiving disturbing news about Khālid's conduct, Abū Bakr neither acted on rumors to discipline his army's commander or suppressed his dissatisfaction with what was supposed to have happened. Rather, he chose to communicate with Khālid and give him the opportunity to clarify his position. Similarly, Khālid chose to respond candidly to his superior's query.

In a letter addressed to Khālid, Abū Bakr inquired why he had married the daughter of the chieftain of the tribe to which he had been sent to discipline and with which he and his soldiers had engaged in ferocious battles:

O Khālid! ... You are enjoying yourself with your bride, while the blood of twelve hundred Muslims (which was spilled in the battle) right at your doorstep has not dried yet. Mujā'ah [the tribe's chieftain] was able to deceive you and entice you to a treaty after you had defeated his people.¹⁴

Responding to these accusations, Khālid wrote back:

I assure you that I did not take my bride until I was satisfied (with the results of the battle) and my mission was completed. And I have chosen to marry (the daughter of) a person whom I would travel from Madinah to seek his relation, but my engagement to his (daughter) was prompted as I am present here. If you disapprove of my marriage for (any) temporal or religious (reasons), I would desist.

As to my mourning of the deceased Muslims, by Allah if grieving protects the living or brings back the dead, my grieving would have done that. I have indeed ambushed until I had no more hope in life, and became certain of my death.

As to Mujā'ah's deception, I do still even now believe that I have made no mistake, and I do not know what the future would bring. But I do believe that Allah has brought goods to the Muslims, made them the inheritors of the land, and conferred the final triumph on the pious.¹⁵

Abū Bakr's decision to communicate his concerns and Khālid's decision to be open and frank were crucial for clarifying misgivings and dispelling suspicion. These attitudes prevented the development of an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, which undoubtedly would have affected relations among Muslim leaders.

While communication is essential for facilitating understanding and exchanging ideas and views, the unity and integration of group members hinges on the actions of the leader and on the kind of measures adopted to deal with subordinates. Not only should leaders ensure that the requirements of fairness and justice are met, but they must project an attitude of caring and sharing to their subordinates. The demands for loyalty to the organization and for devotion to the task at hand must be reciprocated by a true concern for the well-being and growth of followers. Appropriate rewards must be provided, both in terms of material compensation and moral recognition of contributions. Opportunities for improvement in status should also be given.

In short, organization members must feel that they are full partners in improvement and growth if they are to be forthcoming when their contribution and sacrifice is required.

Leaders as Followers

Leadership tasks include, as pointed out earlier, the creation of a culture of devotion, satisfaction, and trust. Creating or reforming an organization's culture is undoubtedly a difficult task, and the leader's success

hinges on a number of factors, most notably the nature of the predominant values and attributes or the degree of deformation in the values and attributes of the organization members.

Reforming an organization simply means introducing a new vision that projects aspirations and modes of operation markedly different from the prevailing ones. Thus, the reformation of an organization presents leaders with a tremendous challenge, for they must overcome the moral and psychological inertia of organization members who are accustomed to the old ways. On certain occasions, the obstacles blocking the reform impetus could become so great that their defeat from within the organization is almost impossible. Such a situation is most likely to occur when the leader who is desirous of reform is himself/herself subject to higher authorities.

This difficulty arises from the moral tension created by the double role of leading and following that has to be played by leaders at the middle level of the command hierarchy, for to be a good leader one has to be a good follower. Among the most outstanding qualities of subordinates is cooperation with the leadership. Obeying rules and commands is essential for the continuation of collective work. Khālid ibn al Walīd, the most renowned military leader in the history of Islam, was always willing to accept the duties of an ordinary soldier under the command of others, even after he became a highly acclaimed general. In the expedition of Mu'tah, for example, he fought willingly as a soldier under the command of Zayd ibn Thābit and agreed to assume command only after those who were chosen by the Prophet to succeed Zayd had perished. Again, many years later he accepted gracefully the decision of 'Umar ibn al Khattāb and surrendered his command to others.

While being a good follower is an important stage in becoming a good leader, the two roles can clash occasionally, for it is the duty of the visionary and forward-looking leader to make all possible attempts to communicate his/her vision and to point out shortcomings and flaws. Sometimes leaders must stand firmly and insist on certain approaches and modes of action. Very often, however, a leader's opposition to decisions and modes of activities is interpreted by superiors as a sign of disloyalty. The more the leader tries to persuade his/her superiors of the need for modifying and changing the way of handling things, the higher the chance of being perceived as "nonconformist" and thereby subject to increasing isolation from his superiors. Leaders have to accept this fate if they are to continue to be true to their visions and beliefs.

One of the most telling examples of the dilemma of maintaining the right balance between being simultaneously a good leader and a good follower come from the life of Khālid himself, a leader whose qualities as a follower are above question. This is the same Khālid who never hesitated to follow the leadership of others, who fought under the orders of less accomplished generals, who had to resist the command of the *khalifah* when he felt they were counterproductive to the accomplishment of his

mission. Ibn Hajar narrated in his *al Isābah fī Ma'rifat al Ṣaḥābah* that 'Umar advised Abū Bakr to

write to Khālid that he should compensate none except with your permission. [Abū Bakr] ordered [Khālid] to do just that. Khālid replied: Either you leave to me the responsibilities of my office or you allow me to leave my office. [Upon learning of Khālid's reply, 'Umar] advised [Abū Bakr] to relieve [Khālid] from his duties. When Abū Bakr asked: Who would accomplish for me what Khālid has been accomplishing?, 'Umar responded: I will When 'Umar prepared himself and was about to leave (to assume Khālid's responsibilities), the Prophet's Companions came to Abū Bakr and said: Why is it that 'Umar is leaving when you need him here, and why did you ask Khālid to step down [from his office] when he has competently executed [all assignments]? [Abū Bakr] asked: What should I do? They said: Command 'Umar to stay and write to Khālid to continue his task. And [this Abū Bakr] did.¹⁶

Evidently, Khālid was relieved from his responsibilities later for declining 'Umar's demands that he should ask permission from the office of the *khalīfah* to compensate his people, because he believed strongly that without such leverage the effectiveness of his office would be diminished.

Conclusion

We stressed in the foregoing pages that the essence of true leadership does not lie purely in the personal qualities of a leader but in how these qualities are brought to bear on the task of leadership. Qualities such as resolve, eloquence, and courage are necessary but insufficient requisites for leading others. For these qualities to give rise to leadership, they must be applied in circumstances where leadership is most needed. To put the point differently, we can say that leadership cannot be grasped by contemplating the individual qualities of leaders but by examining how these qualities interact in a specific context.

In attempting to relate leadership qualities to the task of leading, we are led to recognize that leadership is at bottom a balancing act. As such, leadership involves not only elements susceptible to analysis and explanation but also elements that have always eluded our intellectual penetration and that have been subsumed, by contemporary scholars of leadership, under the rubric of "charisma." These latter elements constitute, it appears, the threshold that brings the human being into contact with his/her divine source through *faith*.

Endnotes

1. R. M. Stogdill, *Handbook of Leadership* (New York: Free Press, 1974), 411.
2. T. O. Jacobs, *Leadership and Exchange in Formal Organizations* (Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization, 1970), 232.
3. K. F. Janda, "Towards the Explication of the Concept of Leadership in Terms of the Concept of Power," *Human Relations* 13 (1960): 345-63.
4. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al Maqārī, *Nafḥ al Ṭib* (Beirut: Dār al Kitāb al 'Arabī, n.d.), 110-11.
5. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 8th ed. (Indianapolis: North American Trust Publications, 1976), 85.
6. Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (California: University Press of California, 1978), 241.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 242.
9. The notion of "vision" will be discussed further below.
10. For example, a leader of a political party with an unpopular message.
11. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al Ḥasan al Murādī, *al Ishārah fī Tadbīr al 'Imārah* (Casablanca, Morocco: Dār al Thaqāfah, 1401/1981), 119.
12. Ṣādiq Ibrāhīm 'Arjun, *Khālīd ibn al Walīd* (Jeddah: Dār al Sa'ūdiyyah li al Nashr, 1403/1983), 213.
13. al Murādī, *al Ishārah*, 1401/1981, 61-62.
14. 'Arjun, *Khālīd ibn al Walīd*, 201.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 297.