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A Reflection On Leadership: A Comparative Analysis Of Military And Civilian Approaches

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Leadership is difficult. Similar to any endeavour that involves human interaction it is mired in the complexities of human behaviour, motivation and personality. Leadership is not a one size fits all activity. It is dependent on the approach and personality of the leader, on those being led, as well as the respective situation and circumstance. While everyone appreciates strong leadership, finding true, inspirational leaders is not all that easy or common whether in the military, public or private sector. Importantly, military and civilian leaders each bring their own strengths and weaknesses to bear and a lot can be learned by examining both styles concomitantly.

The perspective of scarcity in finding inspirational leaders may sound like heresy, especially from someone who has spent 30 plus years in the military. However, it is easy to confuse charisma, strong managerial attributes, decisiveness and authority, just to name a few descriptors, with good leadership. Quite often individuals have difficulty in actually defining what they mean by the term. This shortcoming should not

be surprising since there are as many definitions of leadership as there are people defining it. Moreover, preeminent sociologists Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard asserted that empirical studies tended to show that there was no normative (best) style of leadership and those successful leaders were normally the ones who could adapt their leader behaviour to meet the needs of their followers in a particular situation.

Nonetheless, despite the wide scope of leadership, most would insist that they can recognize good leadership when they see it. Napoleon Bonaparte alone identified 115 characteristics of good leadership. Often, however, the behaviours people credit as showing strong leadership are not actually leadership. Rather they represent different actions and behaviours.

Interestingly, if you were to challenge those in the military, specifically in the combat arms, with defining leadership and / or questioning their understanding of the concept, you would be met by indignation. After all, many believe that everything they do represents leadership since they are the leaders of combat troops. Amazingly, however, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) was bereft of a solid understanding of leadership or leadership doctrine up until approximately 2004/2005 when the first of a series of leadership doctrinal manuals were produced by the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, which itself was only created in 2002.

Up until this time, it was largely assumed that leadership was something you picked up by doing it. The military concept was an industrial age understanding that was basically results orientated. If you were the individual in charge and the task was successfully completed then it was largely understood that you clearly showed leadership. Paradoxically, if the task was a failure, obviously you had bad followers. The only semblance of a "doctrinal base" for leadership that existed in the CAF at this time was former Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) General Jacques Dextraze's several page article on leadership in a 1976 Personnel Newsletter. As such, the operating definition of leadership in the CAF was along the lines of "leadership is the art of influencing and directing others to achieve your will."

This rather superficial and, arguably, "manipulative," if not self-centred, comprehension of leadership showed its weakness in the 1990s in the wake of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. The new era was awash with

challenge and complexity. Canadian society was undergoing a transformation from an attitude of deference to authority to one of defiance. In addition, the government was wrestling with a record deficit and undertook drastic cuts, which all but crippled the CAF. At the same time operations increased dramatically stressing the constrained fiscal envelope available for the military. In addition, a number of sweeping human resource (HR) reforms were imposed on the Department of National Defence (DND), and significantly, with the end of the competing two Super Power paradigm that clearly laid out a set of "rules" of international affairs and delineated the globe into spheres of influence, the new international security landscape was chaotic, complex and highly ambiguous. As if these sweeping changing were not enough, DND, particularly its senior leadership, found themselves under extreme scrutiny for alleged impropriety and poor stewardship of the military profession. Scandal upon scandal ruined the reputation of, and the trust in, DND and the CAF. The "Somalia Crisis," which began in March 1993 with the torture killing of a detained Somali teenager who had been caught trying to steal equipment within the Canadian lines in Belet Huen, Somalia, triggered a monumental crisis that caused the CAF officer corps to implode and take with it a number of senior military and political decision-makers as casualties. The resultant effect was a moniker for the 1990s as the "decade of darkness," which highlighted, in spades, the failure of leadership in the military.

Notwithstanding the importance of the "decade of darkness" as the catalyst for reform in the CAF, this lecture is not focused on that topic. There are ample books and articles that cover events leading up to, during and the subsequent reform movement to pull the CAF out of, the decade of darkness. However, it is the dynamic - the nature of leadership in the practical, real world that has caused me to reflect on "leadership in action" during the course of over three decades in the Canadian Armed Forces serving as a combat arms officer on operations, in garrison, on staff at various level headquarters and in a myriad of positions and situations dealing with civilians, the public service, the general public, academics, business people and members of international agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

Although leadership was arguably a scarce commodity in the CAF prior to the reforms that were undertaken in the wake of the "decade of darkness," the focus after

that cataclysmic period has made the CAF a leader in leadership doctrine and practice. Having said that, there is still much to improve upon.

Once again, the issue of leadership is often misunderstood and people tend to apply actions and behaviours to leadership when they are in fact, not leadership in the truest sense of the word. And so, when one compares the military and civilian domains, each have specific strengths when it comes to leadership and its application. They also share some mutual weaknesses. Nonetheless, prior to providing a perspective on strengths and weaknesses, it is important to clarify what I mean, when I speak about leadership. As such, I wish to start with the term "command" as I believe both the concept and the specific term cause some of the confusion.

Command is generally accepted by the military community to mean "the authority vested in an individual of the armed forces for the direction, co-ordination, and control of military forces." It is understood as a military term and concept, yet at the heart of the issue command is about mission accomplishment and the control of resources. As such, the concept applies to any organization where an individual is given an appointment of authority and control over others. For instance, "command" or headship, "being in charge," or being the boss is basically the authority vested in an individual for the direction, co-ordination and control of organizational resources and personnel. Granted, in the military context, the commander has the authority to order individuals into harm's way, and they are obliged to follow or face sanctions, which can include imprisonment and in the extreme death. Nonetheless, simply put, command, or in a civilian context, headship (although I will refer to the concept for simplicity as only command henceforth) is the purposeful exercise of authority over structures, resources, people and activities.

Command, however, is not a uni-dimensional concept. The all encompassing scope of command is why it comprises of three, often reinforcing, components: authority, management and leadership. Paradoxically, these terms are often either seen as synonymous, or mutually exclusive. But, each component is an integral and often inter-related element of command. Each can achieve a distinct effect. None are necessarily mutually exclusive, although they are not synonymous either. However, when used judicially in accordance with prevailing circumstances and situational factors, they combine to provide maximum effectiveness and success. The manner in

which those in command, or in charge, rely on, or use, any or all of the three actions shapes the command climate. This art is why tenures of command often vary wildly based on the personality of the individual in charge. The style or tone of the command climate is dependent upon which of the actions they place emphasis.

For example, the first component is authority. Commanders can always rely on their authority to implement their will. Authority, which encompasses a legal and, normally for the military which is based on the state, a constitutional component, is always derived from a higher or superior entity. Whether Cabinet, the CDS for the military, or a board of directors / corporate headquarters for a civilian organization, it is this superior entity that gives a commander / boss the right to make decisions, transmit their intentions to subordinates and impose their will on others. As noted earlier, it is military authority, namely by virtue of a service person's unlimited liability and the commander's vested authority to send individuals into harm's way, complete with the support of substantial penalties for non-conformance, that differentiates military command from civilian positions / appointments of power. Although authority is a powerful tool for commanders – reliance on rank and / or "position power" will never build a cohesive, effective team that will withstand the test of crisis. At best, it may present a chimera of an efficient organization, but even this illusion is doubtful.

Notwithstanding that, at times, such as in crisis and / or in the face of individual or group intransigence to necessary change, position power can provide the necessary hammer required to clear the path to renewal or survival. In some circumstances and occasions, authority must be the tool of choice. But, it must be recognized and remembered that the use of position power, no matter how successful in its application, is not leadership.

The second component of command is management. Management is designed to control complexity and increase group effectiveness and efficiency. It is primarily concerned with the allocation and control of resources (i.e. human, financial and material) to achieve objectives. Its focus is staff action such as allocating resources, budgeting, coordinating, controlling, organizing, planning, prioritizing, problem solving, supervising and ensuring adherence to policy and timelines.

Management is also based on formal organizational authority and it is unequivocally results orientated. Its emphasis is on the correct and efficient execution of organizational processes. Clearly, management is of great importance to commanders and leaders. Management skills and practices allow them to ensure that subordinates receive the necessary direction, guidance and resources – on time and where required – to achieve the mission in accordance with the commander's intent. As such, management is a critical and necessary component of command. However, it is not leadership, but then, neither should it be. It serves a distinct and vital purpose necessary to command effectiveness and success. It neither replaces, nor substitutes for leadership. Rather, it is complimentary. It is but one of three instruments, designed to perform a specific function, in the command "tool belt."

This brings us to the third component of command, which is leadership. It is the "human" side of command but it can also be exercised outside of the concept of command. It deals with the purpose of the organization – "doing the right thing" versus "doing it right [management]." The CAF doctrinal definition of leadership, developed in 2004, is "directing, motivating and enabling others to accomplish the mission professionally and ethically, while developing or improving capabilities that contribute to mission success." Whereas management is based on authority and position, leadership relies on influence, either direct or indirect.

In the end, the leadership component of command is about influencing, motivating and inspiring people to achieve some objective that is important to the leader, the group, and the organization. It is the human element – leading, motivating, and inspiring, particularly during times of crisis, chaos and complexity when directives, policy statements and communiqués have little effect. Strong leadership will encourage subordinates to go beyond the obligation to obey and commit to the mission in a way that maximizes their potential. It is the very individualistic, yet powerful component that allows commanders and leaders at all levels to shape and / or alter the environment or system in which people function and thereby, influence attitudes, behaviour and the actions of others.

As described above, leadership goes beyond the pre-reform era definition of leadership that was results orientated. In fact, the new CAF leadership doctrine emphasized the focus on the follower and the necessity of utilizing a professional and

ethical approach, rather than an "ends justifies the means" mentality that arguably can permeate thinking when using a results based methodology. For instance, having created the definition and doctrine, the CAF also espoused a definition for effective leaders that is applicable to any organization. Quite simply, CAF determined that effective leaders:

1. Get the job done;

2. Look after their people;

3. Think and act in terms of the larger team;

4. Anticipate and adapt to change; and

5. Exemplify professional integrity in all they do.

Accomplishing the mission or task was never an issue. However, key to the new approach is the emphasis on followers, and showing the vision and leadership to steward the profession and lead followers effectively through change and times of trouble by effectively anticipating and adapting to the world as it is, rather than what we would like it to be.

This less than nuanced approach was also evident in the creation of the 12 newly revised (rather than the traditional ten old Army) leadership principles:

1.   Achieve professional competence and pursue self-improvement;

2.   Clarify objectives and intent;

3.   Solve problems – make timely decisions;

4.   Direct, motivate by persuasion and example and by sharing risks and hardships;

5.   Train individuals and teams under demanding and realistic conditions;
6.   Build teamwork and cohesion;

7. Keep subordinates informed - explain events and decisions;

8. Mentor, educate and develop subordinates;

9. Treat subordinates fairly, respond to their concerns, represent their interests;

10. Maintain situational awareness - seek information and keep current;

11. Learn from experience and those who have experience; and

12. Exemplify and reinforce the military ethos, maintain order and discipline, uphold professional norms.

Once again, the emphasis centred on personal self-development and professionalism and a focus on the treatment and development of followers. It also hinged on the movement towards transformational leadership, defined as "the ability to attract high levels of respect and trust, and, consequently elicit extraordinary levels of performance from subordinates or followers." Although the theory sounds simple, ensuring its application is much more difficult.

The difficulty of moving towards a transformational model is that there are a number of organizational and personal barriers, whether realized or not. For instance, transformational leadership is achieved by:

1. Exemplifying personal, sometime self-sacrificing commitment to the mission;

2. Stimulating thinking in subordinates and encouraging innovation and creativity;

3. Taking the time to explain meaning and importance of missions and tasks;

4. Exhibiting optimism and inspirational appeals to evoke emotional response; and

5.   Providing individualized consideration for the social, emotional and developmental needs of subordinates.

For the military, and a large number of non-military organizations, some of the factors given above fly in the face of organizational culture and individual issues of authority and position. For example, for organizations where authority, obedience, duty, standardization and uniformity are important, the issues of innovation and creativity and independent thought could create angst if not potential turmoil. Also, for those in positions of authority, often the sentiment, "I don't have to explain myself to anyone," or "Do as your told," compete with transformational leadership intent. The requirement of "providing individualized consideration" also often stirs up criticisms that "we're not a social welfare organization," that "individuals must be responsible for their own personal lives" and a more brusque "suck it up buttercup" approach from those who see self-discipline and a clear line between work and private life. Simply articulating a new approach, no matter how attractive and logical, cannot always surmount existing organizational culture that is deeply rooted and embedded within the organization.

Moreover, the transformational leadership concept also carries with it some significant implications that also tie into the factors given above for achieving transformational leadership. Specifically, a transformational leader:

1.   Must develop trust;

2.   Must have clear channels of communications;

3.   Must ensure actions are in consonance with words and they must be seen;

4.   Must empower individuals / provide voice; and

5.   Must accept honest mistakes.

Once again, the implications represent a considerable barrier to the easy adoption of a transformational leadership approach. For instance, developing trust, empowering individuals and accepting honest mistakes on the surface seem innocuous enough, however, they all represent risk to those in charge. As such, the devil is in the detail. Although many of those in positions of authority are deluded to believe their power and position earns them trust and credibility, it does not. Trust and credibility must be earned. If one wishes to know what is important to an organization or an individual, do not focus on what is written or on what is said, rather, concentrate on what is actually done. It is the actual actions of an entity or individual that truly reflects what they believe in and what is important to them. It is also those actions that earn trust and credibility. For example, if individuals are actually given the freedom to make decisions, to implement the plan of action according to their ideas, are not sanctioned for making honest mistakes, and if the commander demonstrates competence, professionalism and a genuine concern for their welfare, then, followers will begin to have trust and respect for those in charge. It is never enough just to espouse the sentiments without following through with actual deeds.

But again, for the commander / those in charge, there is considerable risk to their reputation, organization and potentially career if tasks are dropped. Empowering individuals is sometimes seen as a loss of authority and control by those in charge. The spectre of mistakes is scary to others who have a zero defect mentality for those subordinate to them. And then, depending on the hierarchical nature of the organization, achieving / maintaining clear lines of communication becomes problematic as messages become distorted and stalled at different levels and through different individual filters.

In sum, moving towards a transformational leadership model, although highly desirable, is not without its difficulties. Nonetheless, this lengthy preamble has been intended to set the context for a brief overview of leadership as it has evolved and continues to evolve during my 30 year tenure in the CAF Regular Force. Despite some pitfalls, the military has certainly come a long way with regards to leadership. Arguably, it has always been able to demonstrate strength, if not be an example, with regard to some leadership attributes. In fact, I believe it has always shown a strength in the following:

1.   Mission Focus;

2.   Breadth of experience;

3.   Discipline;

4.   Team focus;

5.   Cohesion; and

6.   Develop leadership potential.

Mission focus is undoubtedly a key strength that military leaders bring forth in their leadership approach. In fact, mission focus is deeply rooted in the philosophy, if not the very fabric of military leadership. From the very beginning of a career, whether an individual is an enlisted rank or an officer, from day one on basic training, the objective is mission completion. Regardless what is done right, if one fails in completing the mission, you have failed. This emphasis on task completion is reinforced throughout one's career. Military history, training, military mythology about legendary characters or feats, stories of valour, all revolve around mission completion against insurmountable odds. In fact, everyone is imbued with the mantra, "mission, men, self." The mission focus takes additional strength from the bottom line raison d'être for the military - the defence of the nation. As such, there is an unstated social contract with society that the military will be the guardians of the nation and that it will not fail in this task.

This hyper-emphasis on task completion is a major strength as it arms the leader with drive, motivation and determination, all of which are highly contagious to followers. It acts as a catalyst for action. Notwithstanding its strength or importance, it must also be kept in perspective. A danger is always that task completion becomes about task completion without being placed in the proper context. For example, how significant is the actual task? What are the consequences of not completing the assignment? Task completion at what cost? Whenever doing something becomes in

and of itself, there is usually a cost. It is for this reason that the new CAF leadership doctrine placed so much emphasis on looking after your people, as well as accomplishing the mission in an ethical and professional manner.

Another key strength that military leaders bring to the practice of leadership is their breadth of experience. Again, it is difficult for civilian practitioners to compete. Upon graduation from university, a brand new officer, whether second-lieutenant or lieutenant, is given instant responsibility and accountability. They are responsible for up to 40 individuals and millions of dollars of equipment, often on operations in complex conflict scenarios domestically and / or internationally. Few civilian university graduates could compete.

Furthermore, whether enlisted rank or officer, military personnel rotate through different appointments (e.g. operational, instructor, staff, student, mentor, leader) each potentially with dramatically different responsibilities (particularly officers), in different locations, in Canada or overseas. They travel extensively as part of training or actual operations. They are exposed to a myriad of courses, conferences, training events, cultures, employment and deployments, in times of peace, conflict and war. All of this provides them with a wealth of knowledge and experience.

In addition, military leaders are expected to deal with their own human resource (HR) issues. Whether a subordinate has performance, finance, substance abuse or personal problems, to list a few, the military leader is expected to deal with them and provide the first round of counseling to resolve the issue(s). With such a widely varied range of employment and responsibilities, as well as exposure to cultures and peoples throughout Canada and the world, the military leader has a depth of experience to draw from, which allows them to apply that knowledge and practical experience in the exercise of leadership.

Yet another strength of military leaders that allows them to provide an example to others in the application of leadership is discipline, defined as "a sense of training of the mind and character as well as conforming to a system of rules for conduct." Once again, discipline is woven into the very fabric of the military. Both training and military life itself imbues discipline in almost everything one does (e.g. appearance, timings, care of equipment, organization, physical fitness, protocol, deliverables). As such, it

becomes part of the fabric of the military and those in it, if not a way of life. This mental focus / approach to life builds trust, dependability and credibility. It provides a framework for dealing with crisis and problems. In sum, it builds confidence in the leader and those who are being led.

Team focus is another aspect of leadership where military leaders can set an example. Once again, from day one at recruit training, military personnel are taught that success lies in working as a team. Recruits are buried under tasks and tight timings so that the only recourse is to work together to succeed. Once in a unit, the concept of teamwork is further developed through training and sports. In fact, the basic military unit is built one team upon the next (e.g. three sections in a platoon, three platoons in a company, five companies within a battalion / unit); three manouevre units in a brigade).

Additionally, tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs), standard operating procedures (SOPs), doctrine and training exercises all reinforce the team concept. In fact, success on operations is largely dependent on how military leaders can operate within a team setting to apply the necessary military effects to achieve mission completion. As such, military leaders both recognize and are able to promote the importance of team work within a leadership context.

Cohesion is another area of strength in military leaders. American General Edward Meyer described cohesion as "the bonding together of soldiers in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, the unit, and mission accomplishment, despite combat or mission stress." Cohesion is arguably the lifeblood of the military. It is what holds individuals and teams together in times of extreme crisis. Cohesion is all about shared hardship and experience. It is for this reason that special operations forces and airborne units typically have extremely high cohesion - both officers and enlisted personnel undertake the exact same training and undergo the same trials and tribulations. For example, all paratroopers are required to take the same basic paratrooper course (no rank is worn) and all are beasted equally; all jump with the same type of parachute, out of the same aircraft, with the same load, onto the same hard drop zone. It is these shared experiences, particularly combat, that forges bonds that run deep.

As such, military leaders understand the requirement for cohesion and how to attain it. They spend considerable effort towards the end of forming closely knit bonds within their organization and teams. Comparatively, civilian leaders do not fully appreciate cohesion. They understand compatibility and try to ensure that personalities mesh within a group so as not to have personality conflicts, but, most fail to understand cohesion, its importance or how to achieve it. There are of course exceptions. For example, some civilian leaders will take their follower on Outward Bound type activities to forge the bonds of shared experience and hardship through activities that force individuals to face and overcome their personal fears.

The final strength that military leaders bring to the practice of leadership that I will discuss as part of this lecture is the development of leadership potential in others. Once again, this is due as much out of necessity as it is ingrained in the fabric of the military psyche. First, is the issue of necessity. The military is an organization that survives on the annual infusion of large numbers of inexperienced, young recruits. Its turn-over in personnel and positions is extremely high. Its organizations and units are filled with large number of rank and file expected to execute complex, synchronized activities within a highly structured team context, in chaotic, hazardous conditions. As a result, there is a requirement for a large number of leaders at all levels. Turnover cannot always be predicted, therefore, individuals within the organization must always be developed to take-over the next level of supervision or leadership unexpectedly. For example, during Operation Medusa in Afghanistan, on 3-4 September 2006, the First Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group suffered significant casualties. The CDS at the time, General Rick Hillier, described:

On that terrible Labour Day weekend in 2006, one of the engaged sub-units, Charles Company of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group, lost their company commander, a company sergeant-major, one out of three platoon commanders, all three platoon warrant officers (one wounded, two killed), lost five of nine section commanders and they lost all of their sections' second in command master-corporals. In total they suffered five killed and more than 40 wounded in a 48-hour period. But what is important to note is that those who survived all stepped up. A young sergeant promoted to that rank less than a year earlier became the company

sergeant-major. Young master-corporals became platoon commanders and platoon second-in-commands.

The development of leadership potential is started upon entry into the military. During recruit training and every course following it, individuals are thrust into leadership positions above their training or rank level. This practice is furthered in the unit and during training, out of deliberate thought as well as necessity due to shortages or absences. In addition, practices such as post-exercise reviews, hot wash-ups, and post exercise and periodic assessments are all designed to share weaknesses, common errors and best practices with a wide leadership audience to prepare them to take on greater responsibility. This wide-spread and encompassing methodology ingrains in military leaders the requirement to develop, as well as the practice of developing, followers to become future leaders. In addition, the constant exposure to the practice, as well as leadership appointments provides military leaders with a wealth of experience (both good and bad leadership experiences, which are equally good for the education of others) that can subsequently be put into effect. It also embeds in them philosophically the requirement to continually develop leadership potential in others.

Intuitively, one can see that military leaders due to their role in society, as well as the organizational culture and framework, require high levels of leadership and have an environment that allows them to develop and practice leadership. Nonetheless, civilians and civilian organizations also bring strengths to the practice of leadership that are noteworthy. Specifically, civilian leaders set an example in their:

1.   Belief in, and support of, education;

2.   Collaboration with others;

3.   Support of creativity; and

4.   Patience.

The first strength in which civilian leaders clearly have something to teach the military is in the realm of education, specifically their comprehension of its importance, their desire to attain it for themselves and the value they see in their followers possessing it or attaining it. Although the military has come a long way from its largely

pre-reform era rabid anti-intellectualism, it still is not on par with its civilian counterparts. Education is often seen by military leaders in terms of "credentialization" for advancement and in terms of cost in time and money, as opposed to their civilian counterparts who see education for the enabler it is.

After all, education has been described by Dr. Ronald Haycock as the "the reasoned response to an unpredictable situation - critical thinking in the face of the unknown." According to Royal Military College of Canada (RMCC) Professor David Last, education "is the shaping of the mind." Quite simply, education assists in our reasoning ability, which in turn is critical in responding to unanticipated circumstances. As the adage goes, you train for certainty and educate for uncertainty. Education is rooted in critical thinking, problem solving and analytical research. It better prepares individuals to think, as well as cope with problems and situations that are unexpected. It assists individuals to not only embrace change, but to adapt to and anticipate it. More importantly, it instils in people the attitude and ability to constantly learn from one's environment and to prepare, as well as react, accordingly. As such, it is easy to understand why leaders would value education as it empowers them to utilize the skill sets and experience they have and apply it against unforeseen challenges, as well as renewal and change requirements.

Another strength that civilian leaders bring to the practice of leadership is collaboration. As opposed to team work, set in the context of standardized lexicons / doctrine / TTPs / SOPs, as well as ingrained organizational cultures and common behaviour-sets, collaboration in this context refers to working with different partners from a myriad of sectors and backgrounds. It refers to seeking out non-traditional players and developing cooperative relationships and networks. Civilian leaders seek out such opportunities because of the value they see in sharing ideas, discussing issues and expanding partnerships, as well as building networks. Civilian leadership is often less concerned with structured relationships, meetings and determining who is in charge and more focused on expanding opportunities and attaining mutual goals.

Similarly, and tied to both education and collaboration, civilian leadership also tend to put more value on creativity. Civilian leaders tend to see creativity as value added as it feeds the development of new products, innovative processes and increases competitiveness. Conversely, although the military applauds innovation, it tends to

reward conformity. After all, the military is built on uniformity, standardization, drills, doctrine, TTPs and SOPs. In many ways, creativity can be seen as a threat to the choreography of military operations. And, one could argue that if recruit training and the myriad of rules and regulations do not dull creativity in the military, the bureaucracy and mind-numbing administrative process soon will.

The final strength that civilian leaders bring to the table that I will discuss in this lecture is patience. Perhaps it is the lack of discipline or the absence of a hyper mission focus, but civilian leaders tend to be more relaxed and patient than their military counterparts. Patience is key as it allows time for reflection, rumination and second thought. It allows, or theoretically at least, for a more detailed brain storming and analysis. This virtue allows individuals to develop and learn from the process and achieve their utmost.

Within the military there seems to be a lack of patience and a perpetual rush to get things done "now." Whether commanders deciding they need a report or paper immediately because the issue is currently on their radar; or because a superior has asked for information; or because directives sat on someone's desk forgotten and now the due date is quickly looming; or an over eager staff officer is trying to impress their superior with their ability to access material quickly, there seems to be a plethora of false deadlines. As a result, often the necessary intellectual rigour is absent. Good enough to meet the remit becomes essential. The BlackBerry has not helped. If anything it has fed the need for instantaneity. More worrisome is the ability to flash out an immediate requirement to a large number of addressees, which increases the ability and odds of the originator getting the information they wish, but at the cost of redundancy and wasting precious time of others.

In any case, patience is a virtue and it is a strength for leaders to demonstrate. It ensures followers have time to develop ideas and plans and work through problems. Of course, patience should not be confused with tolerating sloth.

The list of strengths shown by military and civilian leaders should not be seen as all inclusive. They were the strengths that I felt were the most evident to me over the years. Likewise, I have also observed that both military and civilian leaders share a

number of traits that detract from their ability to exercise the best leadership possible. The most evident are:

1.   Lack of humility;

2.   Reluctance to accept risk;

3.   Poor communications; and

4.   Resistance to accepting responsibility / accountability.

Although to a degree understandable as a part of human behaviour, it appears that as individuals climb up the ladder into greater positions of authority and leadership they begin to lose their humility and start to believe in their infallibility. The more senior the individual the more likely they are to become dismissive of others, less likely to listen and more prone to monopolize the discussion. They are also more likely to be impatient, assume that they are the experts based on their position and lose touch with reality to the point they feel their explanation whether bereft of substance or accuracy is enough and followers should just accept what they say.

Two remarkable examples punctuate the issue. In the first example, a three-star general told an auditorium full of lieutenant-colonels about to become commanding officers that at this point in his career he did not want staff officers with big ideas but rather he wanted highly energized worker bees. The second example is no less telling. During the Somalia crisis, a two-star general level paraded all the officers of one of his garrisons in the respective base theatre. As he strut across the stage in his best General George Patton imitation he decried the mythology of a crisis within DND and the CAF, as well as the inaccurate reporting of the media that there was distrust of the senior leadership within DND and the CAF. He paced back and forth and bellowed his message. Then, he suddenly stopped, faced the assemblage and paused for dramatic effect. He then boldly promised, "I'll prove to you there is no crisis in trust in the senior leadership." He then stared out at the audience and proceeded to ask, "Who doesn't trust their senior leadership – raise your hand." He waited for a few moments and then broke into a huge smile. "See," he boomed, "I told you." For those in the crowd, it now became evident the problem was worse than we had suspected.

It cannot be forgotten that leadership, particularly transformational leadership, is about inspiring, motivating, nurturing, developing followers. It is about helping them to achieve more than they thought possible. This process can only be done by empowering followers to make decisions, honest mistakes and to learn. If one wishes to simply execute one's will - authority can achieve that, but it should not be mistaken for leadership. This misattribution is commonly done by those in senior positions. They mistake the exercise of command with the practice of leadership.

Another common area of weakness is risk acceptance. It is easy to understand the hesitation as there is often much at stake (e.g. money, reputation, safety, mission completion). However, it is also important to examine the risk of not doing something. Moreover, a risk averse approach carries significant consequences. For instance, it breeds a zero defect mentality that associates any mistake as a deadly, career ending event. As a result, innovation and initiative die. It becomes easier and safer to do nothing than risk making a mistake. Paralysis ensues.

In the end, it is critical that leaders accept risk. They must empower and trust their subordinates / followers to act within their mandate and make the appropriate decisions. They must be prepared to shield them and ensure they are not penalized if honest, ethical mistakes are made. The acceptance of risk will ensure timely decisions are made and the appropriate actions taken. In most cases, your people will not let you down.

Communications is another critical weakness of both military and civilian leaders. Communications is the lifeblood of any organization, or relationship for that matter. It is key to leadership as it is the medium for discourse, intent and understanding, as well as developing trust, consideration and credibility. It is, however, hard work and requires constant attention. There are many barriers to communications, which is why most are bad at it. First, much gets lost in transmission. The message sent is not always the message that is received. Personal filters often interpret the message in ways that make sense to the recipient, either consciously or unconsciously. Second, although everyone wants to know everything and feels they have a right to know everything, paradoxically once they receive the information they tend to not pass it on. Third, often information transmitted is just ignored and when

questioned it is always easier to say "no one tells me anything," rather than admit negligence in paying attention. Finally, there is a tendency for leaders to pass the message and walk away. However, if the message is important, the leader must follow up; s/he must walk the floor and be seen. The leader must continually reinforce the message.

Communications are not a fire and forget concept. To be effective they must be relentlessly propagated. Leaders must also realize that as important as communications are, for most followers, the acid test of reality is what the leader actually does - that is what is interpreted as being important to the leader. Therefore, communication must be reinforced by consistency, continuity and action.

The final mutual weakness I will touch on is the acceptance of responsibility. Despite the humility piece about knowing everything, undoubtedly when something goes wrong, seniors often know nothing. Unfortunately, mistakes tend to be seen as threats to careers and as a result more effort goes into placing blame than trying to determine what happened and what can be done to ensure it does not reoccur. Forgotten are the speeches of command accountability and responsibility and how they are responsible for everything that happens on their watch. As the scramble for cover commences, followers learn that mistakes are to be feared and blame partitioned as quickly as possible. Concomitant with mistakes are violent pendulum swings of corrective action that tend to pile on unneeded processes and procedures. As much as we proclaim that mistakes are acceptable as long as one learns from them, the reality is we fail to accept that there is such a thing as an honest mistake. However, to achieve transformational leadership, leaders must be prepared to not only accept risk and empower their followers to make decisions but also to make honest, ethical mistakes. In the end, they must also protect them from any recrimination or fall-out.

This lecture was not designed to be all-encompassing dissertation on leadership in the military or civilian sector. Rather, it reflects some perceptions that I have developed over a 30 year career working with a myriad of military and civilian players during peace-time soldiering, on operations and in academia. They are my perceptions and reflect my experience and my personal filters. As such, individuals are free to agree or disagree.

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