

What it Takes to Supervise a Community Devastated by War

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Entering the Foreign Service in 1964, Robert W. (Bill) Farrand served in U. S. embassies in Kuala Lumpur, Moscow, Prague, and Port Moresby. He was appointed Ambassador to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu in April 1990. In 1993, Farrand became Deputy Commandant for International Affairs at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (Washington, D.C.). In 1995, he joined the staff of the Inspector General of the Department of State. In March 1997, Farrand was named Supervisor of the Bosnian city of Brčko (population 80,000) where he spent three years seeking to restore order in the aftermath of Europe's most savage war since 1945. Departing Bosnia in May 2000, Farrand is now at George Mason University in Virginia as a distinguished fellow and affiliate professor.

Much is said and written these days on the issue of competence in the conduct of post-conflict peace and stability operations.¹ Understandably, the elusive attribute of “competence” is more often noted by its absence than by its presence. Once a peace operation flounders or is seen to be failing, the search for someone to blame—to accuse of *incompetence*—begins. Such an indictment, if you happen to be on the receiving end of it, can be devastating. When one looks hard at this phenomenon, however, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that not enough up-front effort goes into the selection and training of persons tapped to undertake these highly unorthodox—even hybrid—challenges. As in my case, professional diplomats, for example, are simply not groomed to take on civilian leadership roles in such unusual and often dangerous assignments. Nonetheless, the career diplomat is routinely tagged—along with the occasional retired military officer—as the default candidate to undertake leadership roles in these highly problematic and perplexing operations.

People often ask me just what qualifications I brought to the task of supervising a tautly wired city like Brčko (pronounced: BIRCH-koh) in a war-torn land like Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). They are curious to know why I was tapped for the Brčko job and why, once tapped, I thought I could do it. They wonder what it was in my experience and background that prompted the State Department to task me with this unusual off-line assignment. Good questions all, particularly since the Brčko challenge represented a sharp change from the substance and rhythm of diplomatic work in which up until then I had spent my professional life.

¹ This paper is adapted from a chapter in the author's forthcoming book: “Brčko—Bringing Order Out of Chaos.”

As noted earlier in this account, I had agreed on but a few hours' reflection to leave Saudi Arabia, where I was leading a team inspecting our embassy and consulates, and return immediately to Washington for a hurried round of high-level briefings on Brčko and the critical role it had come to play in the prospects for peace throughout BiH. It quickly became clear to me that in three decades of diplomatic service, I had yet to encounter a tangled web of ethnic hatreds and war-induced wounds—physical and psychological—like the mess awaiting me on the Sava River in north-eastern Bosnia. Nor had I ever contemplated being asked to oversee—to supervise—the day-to-day governance of a community of any kind or shape in the world. The subject had simply never come up in all my years in the business; none of my varying job descriptions had ever envisaged such a possibility, nor, so far as I am aware, had those of my colleagues. Without experience in the pragmatics of government, I thought of myself as an “off-the-shelf” diplomat, a sort of jack-of-all-trades, somewhat versed in the ways of the world with only limited exposure to the Balkans. Much of what I knew about the art and practice of diplomacy, I had absorbed through the doing of it and from closely observing senior diplomats at work. In sum, I had nothing by way of formal training and little by way of experience to fall back on as I girded myself for the job ahead in the strategically situated municipality of Brčko.

I am often asked my opinion on what would be the ideal mix of professional skills, temperament, personality, and so on, which a civilian administrator in a post-conflict peace and stability operation should possess. As this is written, our nation is still engaged to varying degrees in stability operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. Although it would be foolhardy to predict exactly when and where, it is a near certainty that we will be engaged in more such operations in the future. I will therefore attempt in the pages that follow to render my opinion—and it is just that: an opinion—on that question, mixing hard facts with subjective observations and hunches. To a considerable extent, I acknowledge up front that my argument will rest on the questionable value of dealing in stereotypes. But you have to start somewhere.

My experience in Brčko gave me insights into what seems now to be an emerging consensus that selecting the right person or persons for civilian leadership positions in post-conflict peace and stability operations is *sine qua non* to success. I therefore suggest several desiderata for policymakers to consider in vetting candidates for these high profile positions.

First, I begin with a fundamental observation: to be effective, a person nominated for a civilian leadership role in such operations must be prepared to commit to it for a minimum of a year, and longer if need be. Shorter commitments of time—say, six to nine months—simply will not cut it in view of the need to establish interpersonal relations with a wide array of actors as you seek to establish your authority based more on suasion than diktat. Such relationships cannot be established overnight; they take time. Although my tenure in Brčko ran to 38 months, a stretch of time many of those close to me considered excessive, such a lengthy presence on the ground had its good points. I well remember Milorad Dodik, Prime Minister of (the ill-named) Republika Srpska (RS), saying to me, and I paraphrase: “I have stopped learning the names of international officials who come to see me. No sooner do I learn a person’s name and function than he or she departs to be replaced by another short-termer. You, on the other hand, have been around long enough for me to get to know you. I am therefore happy to meet with you whenever you come to Banja Luka (capital of the RS).” A civilian administrator’s readiness to remain in the job for as long as it takes, first, to restore a modicum of order and, second, to launch the torn community on the path to reconciliation, will be seen by the people and their leaders, whether they like you or not, as a mark of

serious commitment to and genuine concern for the process of restoring peace in the land. As Dodik implied, longevity *by itself* counts for much in the estimation of the native body politic and its leaders. In my judgment, therefore, a candidate's willingness (or lack thereof) to commit for the longer haul should be a critical factor in determining his or her suitability for the job. The overall mission suffers when those in top leadership positions are constantly changing: "parachuting in and out" is the phrase often used to describe the phenomenon.

My second observation has to do with the question of where to look for candidates to fill these out-of-the-mainstream roles based on professional qualities and life's seasoning. For sake of argument, I have come up with five categories of professions—based on education, special training, unique skills, etc.—that can be usefully, if imperfectly, compared as reservoirs of potential candidates for civilian leadership roles. These categories are: career diplomats, lawyers, academics, retired business executives, military officers (active and retired), and, last but not least, politicians.

One would think right off the bat that members of the Foreign Service—career diplomats—would make excellent, even ideal, nominees for such positions. Indeed, as noted above, the Foreign Service is the category most often looked to by default to provide candidates to fill these jobs. Let us therefore begin this discussion by taking a brief look at diplomats and the professional world in which, as a general rule, they operate. When assigned abroad, the diplomat's highest priority is faithfully to represent, promote, and advance his or her nation's interests and policies in the host country. Diplomats observe, analyze, and report back to capitals—London, Washington, Moscow, Ottawa, etc.—on events and happenings in their country of assignment that are relevant to their *home* government's interests and concerns. With rare exceptions, the weighty decisions are made in capitals with instructions sent to the field—to ambassadors—for conveying to the host government. To be sure, diplomats contribute facts and analysis to the policy-making process, but rarely make the big decisions themselves. Thus, the diplomat's primary function comes down to exerting influence on and persuading host governments to act in ways conducive to good relations with the diplomat's (sending) government.

Diplomacy can be a demanding process, requiring of its practitioners a keen understanding of political, economic, and social factors and tensions in the host (receiving) country, as well as a comprehensive awareness of international forces at play in the host nation's region of influence. Because the diplomat is unable to exert direct influence over a host government's decision-making process, his or her effectiveness will often depend on having deep reserves of patience and persistence. Under accepted tenets of international law and tradition, diplomats are proscribed from meddling in the internal affairs of a foreign nation. Indeed, one of the prime tenets of diplomacy is never, *never* to interfere in the internal affairs of another country.²

Occasionally, a lucky diplomat will be thrust into a high-stakes negotiation in the field that will demand long and unrelenting hours. (Even here, however, the diplomat is likely to be relegated to a supporting role since, increasingly, teams of substantive and technical negotiators are dispatched to the field from home, especially to deal with high profile issues involving extraordinary legal and technical complexity). But such heady assignments are hardly the norm. For most diplomats the "norm" is a quiet, steady routine of interacting with

² An even bigger "no-no" is to get *caught* interfering in the internal affairs of another country. Such a frightful thought, however, is beyond the scope of this discussion.

the host government bilaterally on a gamut of issues, among them: making *demarches*³ to protect your nation's trade and commercial interests, securing over-flight rights for aircraft, supporting Washington-directed negotiations, visiting fellow countrymen ensnared in local laws or in hospital, attending official ceremonies, and so on. All these efforts are carried out through discussions with host government officials and do not involve interacting or communicating with private persons—the people—of the host nation.⁴

The agenda I was to carry out in Brčko as the international Supervisor differed sharply from the above description of diplomatic work. Consider the language of the First Award on the Supervisor's four main objectives: “to ensure freedom of movement,” “to establish a program to govern the...return of former residents,” “to ensure [conduct of]...free and fair elections,” “[to] issue such regulations and orders as may be required to enhance democratic” multi-ethnic government, “to assist...international development agencies to...implement a[n]...economic revitalization program” [emphasis mine]. Nothing passive about the verbs used here, nor about their meaning. Clearly, as Supervisor, I would be actively engaged in the life of the Brčko municipality—in my defined area of supervision—far from the operating norms of diplomacy to which I was accustomed. To be sure, like all diplomats, I had made decisions on many matters over the years, but such decisions were of a different order from sorts of the issues I would be forced to address and decide on in Brčko. Indeed, the First Arbitral award gave the supervisor virtually free rein in supervising the city and its outlying local communities.

Precedents for such a remarkable conferring of power on an appointed international official may be found in postwar Berlin and Tokyo in 1945, as well as in lesser known cities such as Poland's Danzig during the inter-war years (1920-39) and Italy's Trieste just after World War II (1947-54).⁵ But, these few examples come close to exhausting the list of precedents.

All of this begs the question: does a training facility or basic course exist where a career diplomat—a Foreign Service officer—might be sent to learn the fundamentals of civilian leadership and hands-on governance? Well, no, as it turns out; such a focused training regimen does not currently exist in the Foreign Service. Remember, we are talking about a Service that prides itself on having well-educated “generalist” officers who, as professional jacks-of-all-trades, are considered to be trainable (read: self-trainable) on the fly. So where was I to look for guidance as I prepared to shift from a comparatively passive to a decidedly proactive mode of management? For the fact was that when it came to the hands-on management of large organizations, I, like most diplomats, had only a vicarious notion. As a rule, a diplomat's managerial experience is limited to overseeing the work of but a handful of other diplomats with correspondingly tiny clerical staffs. I imagine that Foreign Service officers reading this may, and likely will, take sharp exception to my boiled-down description of the diplomatic trade. They may with complete justification point to the fact that most diplomats work longer hours and with less recognition, both abroad and in Washington, than nearly all other groupings of Federal employees. Since entry into the Foreign Service is still

³ From the French, meaning “a diplomatic representation or protest.”

⁴ Of course, diplomats involved in public diplomacy, especially those who worked in the old U.S. Information Agency before it was disbanded in 1999 under pressure from then-Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), do in fact make it their business to reach out to host country publics, but in an informational mode only.

⁵ In addition to these two “free cities,” mention should also be made of the Tangiers International Zone (1923-56).

relatively selective—in a typical year, some three hundred applicants out of more than ten thousand are welcomed into the Service—diplomats are assumed to be highly motivated and disciplined in representing the United States to the rest of the world. Consequently, diplomats tend as a profession to view the need for continual in-service training as unnecessary and less than vital to their careers. Indeed, because of the time it would entail away from their work, many diplomats even look upon training as *harmful* to their professional advancement.

With the Brčko experience still fresh in my mind, I would argue that my Foreign Service colleagues who think that way are dead wrong—especially when circumstances arise, as they are doing with increasing frequency, which will require a career diplomat to perform in a role that comports hardly at all with the standard diplomatic mold. To be fair, however, and for a variety of reasons, the U.S. Foreign Service has been decidedly understaffed in recent years, which translates to heavy workloads for its members deployed around the globe. So I do not wish in the slightest to diminish the enormous contributions diplomats routinely make to our nation's well-being and security. I was one of them, after all. I am trying to draw a distinction here between the working world of a diplomat, who deals primarily with government officials, and that of a municipal supervisor (or city manager), who must frequently deal with people at first hand. As one who has played both roles, I can assure you there is a major distinction here: not dissimilar to that between a wholesaler and a retailer.

So if diplomats are not my ideal candidates to lead a post-conflict peace effort, where then might we turn to find civilians with the skill sets necessary to fill leadership roles in such high-profile operations? In the discussion that follows, I have chosen, in an admittedly stereotypical fashion, to lump together members of various professions and occupations into different pools where policymakers might look for candidates. I make no pretense at socio-scientific rigor here, nor do I presume there can be no overlapping skills between these candidate pools. My purpose, quite simply, is to set up straw men so I can knock them down one-by-one before reaching my preferred pool of potential civilian leaders.

First, let us next examine the legal profession. Few would quarrel with my broad observation (remember, we're into stereotyping here) that lawyers are trained primarily as advisors and interpreters of the law, which is why they are called "counselors." In the first place, lawyers tend to think differently from the rest of us: more analytic, less susceptible to impulse, more cautious in reaching conclusions than the common run of humankind. Observing State Department lawyers over the years, for example, I found them more inclined to look for reasons why something could *not* be done, rather than why it could be done. My close association with international lawyers in Brčko leads me to observe that in their approach to governance, many lawyers, not all, tended to be wary and a trifle stiff (not to say rigid) in insisting on legal precedent before proceeding to act. Excellent qualities all, but not necessarily those you need in a fast-moving crisis that calls for bold action/reaction. In the immediate aftermath of war it is a fact of life that local law effectively disappears as if into a void that can and may persist for a very long time. I have argued that instilling (or restoring) the rule of law must be the civilian administrator's highest priority on which, to one degree or another, all other priorities will depend. While civilian administrators (supervisors) engaged in this large effort ignore at their peril advice and counsel from their legal staff, they (the administrators) need not, indeed should not, be lawyers themselves. Taken as a class, therefore, lawyers would not be my first choice for civilian leadership positions in the sort of unsettled, post-conflict contexts we are discussing here.

Next, let us consider academia as a potential source of civilian leaders. With utmost respect for the operational—yes, operational—value of intellectual discourse on issues relating to peace, how it is lost, how best restored, etc., I hazard the opinion that the academic mind is far more adept at researching, analyzing, and theorizing about ways to fix a broken society than it is at actually managing the corrective process itself. The academic expert's strength, as I see it, lies in thinking reflectively and teaching effectively on these large issues, rather than in engaging hands-on in all the practical aspects of undertakings as, say, city governance.⁶ Thus, while professors of relevant academic disciplines can certainly bring invaluable scholarly insights to peace operations, they should not as a rule be considered candidates for leading such operations unless they have proven themselves as successful practitioners in the field. Such experience is, however, hard to come by in the academic world.

We turn now to the suitability of another potential category of candidates for civilian leadership roles: retired business executives and their hard-headed pursuit of the “bottom line.” Let me begin by observing that while the art of governance does indeed have a “bottom-line,” it is of a different type and kind from that which famously drives the business world. The bottom-line for government is to be measured by the successful delivery of public services—law enforcement, defense, education, health protection, sanitation, water, etc.—to the citizenry and not, as in business, in the delivery of goods and services to the market place where they are intended to generate profits (or losses) for shareholders. To be sure, both spheres of activity require knowledge, skill, and patience --but they differ fundamentally as to means and ends. I suggest that business executives—however clear-eyed and forceful they might be in the world of commerce—would find it exceedingly difficult to function in the near-chaotic context of an environment in which normal conditions for doing business have been swept away. As the experience of the American businessman Claude Ganz showed, the time for entrepreneurs to arrive on scene is after the mess has been largely cleaned up, investor-friendly laws are on the books, and a functioning court system capable of quickly resolving disputes is in place. Only in this relatively benign atmosphere would business executives find their comfort zone. So I do not see in retired business executives a particularly fruitful reservoir of talent from which to draw civilian supervisors for the early phase of a post-conflict operation. Quite apart from professional considerations, moreover, is the question of whether a business executive, active or retired, would agree to work for the relatively low salaries offered to would-be administrators in post-war crisis zones.

Next we consider active-duty military officers and their potential to serve temporarily in the role of civil administrators. In early post-conflict settings like Brčko, where military officers can and do find themselves thrust into dual roles as civil governors, they must adjust habitual modes of thinking and doing as war-fighters to a radically different mode of functioning? Simply put, the governing of a civilian populace is a calling for which most military officers, as with most diplomats, rarely have a natural aptitude. Civil governance

⁶ A tip of my hat, in this connection, to the scores of academic theorists on peace and governance who contributed to the collection of some 40 papers published by the U.S. Institute of Peace in 1996 under the title “Managing Global Chaos.” The 600-page tome is a rich assortment of think pieces on topics ranging across the spectrum from maintaining the peace, to resolving inter- and intra-national conflict, to illuminating the power of democracy and the rule of law around the globe. This volume had a special place on my reading stand. I spent many an hour thumbing its pages looking for guidance in theory and practice. In my isolated corner of Bosnia, since I had no one in a similar situation to which I could turn for an exchange of views on operational matters, I found comfort in consulting works like “Managing Global Chaos” for larger ideas that were germane to my work.

calls for a vastly different set of skills than military maneuvers require—skills that emphasize construction over destruction, peace over war, the non-kinetic over the kinetic. It is thus far from easy for professional soldiers trained to destroy the enemy in battle to throttle back from the edge of combat to a less intense and more nuanced plane of action. To restrain the propensity to employ force first and ask questions later requires a conscious change in the military officer’s rules of engagement—ROE—which guide the behavior of soldiers deployed in the field. For the military professional, the transition from “hot” war-fighting to comparatively “cool” post-conflict operations (policing, repairing infrastructure, providing community services, etc.) can be a disorienting experience, especially when feelings of hostility and fear from combat operations remain paramount, not only within the military itself but, more importantly, among the indigenous populace.⁷ My deputy and friend, retired brigadier Ian McLeod, once remarked how difficult it was to manage this balancing act when he commanded British troops in Northern Ireland during the 1980s and early 1990s. “I was trained to blow up villages, not rebuild them!” he exclaimed one day as he and I pored over plans to restore Brčko’s flattened neighborhoods.

Let us take Brčko as a case in point. Before my arrival on scene, the task of overseeing and attending to the needs of Brčko’s rump civilian populace had been, for all intents and purposes, placed firmly in the hands of a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel who commanded the 800-strong NATO Stabilization Force (SFOR) battalion at Camp McGovern. This highly competent and energetic Army officer had all he could do to perform his primary mission of restoring a safe and secure environment in which the local populace might begin to sort through the wreckage of war. Added to this primarily military mission were the largely civilian function of reinvigorating the Brčko police force and establishing a rudimentary framework for local government. Here was a military officer attempting to run a city, a task for which he surely had no prior training, with an indigenous police force comprised of remnants of the *Vojska Republike Srpske* (VRS, Army of the Republika Srpska)—none of whom he could trust.

Furthermore, messy post-conflict environments do not lend themselves to the setting of precise objectives and the crisp planning that are hallmarks of military operations. To operate in a world without classified intelligence where orders, once given, may or may not be carried out; where ambiguity reigns; where little goes as planned; and where resources are hard to come by is the very antithesis of the military world. Were a military officer to find himself appointed as a civilian peace implementer, the frustration engendered by some or all of these factors would, I suggest, put their patience and sense of order to the severest test.

Despite its commitment to training, the U.S. Army, like the Foreign Service, has no fixed site where the fundamentals of peace and stability operations are routinely taught to officers—commissioned and non-commissioned—before they deploy to a crisis zone. The Army’s Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI), located in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, is devoted to the research, study, and dissemination of information on peace operations—the so-called “Phase IV” of a military intervention. West Point, too, has recently incorporated a new course for the cadets on the principles of reconstruction and stability.

⁷ That said, intuitively speaking, the war-fighter should be better able to ratchet down to a peace operation than the peacekeeper to ratchet up to war-fighting. But intuition does not always serve us well. The issue here is far more complicated and depends on the level of training and experience of soldiers and the quality of their leadership. To military commanders, the war-fighting “edge,” once attained by troops under their command, is an asset to be prized and protected against missions, such as peacekeeping, that would tend to attenuate (soften) the unit’s combat readiness.

These educational initiatives, while certainly welcome, are once removed from the urgent need to incorporate these concepts operationally in current training for troops about to be deployed into post-conflict war zones. The Army does, though, make a good faith effort to include stability and reconstruction “events” into military readiness exercise (MRX) scenarios conducted before major units deploy—or redeploy—into post-conflict environments. An MRX lasts for approximately two weeks and focuses on classic war-fighting: how the commander is to maneuver against armed resistance in his area of responsibility. The point here is that a military commander is duty bound to keep his unit ready for war—a simple matter of professional and practical survival. Training activities, therefore, which did *not* improve war-fighting skills—like, for example, training for reconstruction and stability operations—were, until recently, clearly subordinated to the maneuver (war-fighting) mentality. Again, this is a long way of saying that most military officers spend their time—as their profession rightly demands—preparing for war, not peace.

What then about senior military officers who, steeped in this warrior mindset, are called from retirement to serve as civilian administrators in Phase IV operations? How are they likely to fare in such an unaccustomed role? Two factors stand out: First, the old adage “Once a Marine, always a Marine!” applies in varying degrees to military officers across-the-board. Having spent their careers in disciplined service to their nation, military officers not surprisingly carry into retirement a lifetime of respect for and deference to rank. This phenomenon, unremarkable by itself, takes on operational significance when, as “civilian” administrators, they must interact with a military commander whose rank is higher than the rank they attained before retiring. Second, the often ambiguous and frequently blurred lines of authority among civilians can be frustrating to a person habituated to hierarchy and to clear, step-by-step decision-making rooted in settled doctrine, unambiguous objectives, and unambiguous timelines.⁸

What about the international civil servant? Here we have a pool of experienced persons many of whom will have been schooled or practiced in the fundamentals of peacekeeping. In the United Nations, for example, a real effort has been made in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to train a cadre of personnel for moving in on a complex post-war contingency operation of the sort we are talking about here. Okay, so in the wide pool of international civil servants we seem to have found the Holy Grail; we need look no further, yes? Well, no. As it happens, this entire category of professional civilians was removed from consideration for top peacekeeping posts in BiH because of the UN’s poor performance in protecting Bosniak citizens during the war, especially in the wake of the Serbian massacre of 7,000 Muslim men in Srebrenica in July 1995. Although admittedly that hopefully one-time happening would be unlikely to recur, the fact that it happened once could not be ignored. Other international organizations are often hampered by the lack of a robust mandate for peace *operations*, per se, and by internal personnel policies that restrict the length of time their members can serve in-country. The Organization for European Cooperation and Development (OECD), for example, functions largely with staffs that are seconded from member countries for periods not to exceed six months.

⁸ The U.S. Army refers to it formally as the “Military Decision-Making Process,” or MDMP for short. Military officers, active and retired, are likely to be a more than a little baffled by the less formal way in which civilians arrive at decisions—often opaquely and indirectly. The reverse can also be true, if perhaps to a lesser degree, for civilians working alongside military officers in post-conflict theaters. The former are likely to perceive the latter as somewhat hidebound and rigid in their thought processes. Despite these differences, however, in my experience both avenues to arriving at workable solutions can be synergistically employed to good effect in a peace operation.

So where does that leave us? Putting aside, for the sake of simplicity, all the thousands of other professions that have nothing at all to do with peace operations, I come down squarely on the side of professional politicians—yes, politicians—as the preferred candidate pool for such civilian leadership roles. Despite the widely accepted canard that politicians are irredeemably dishonest, untrustworthy, unprincipled and so on, the fact is that without dedicated politicians we would be adrift in our public life. Politicians are quintessentially human; the Yiddish word *mensch* comes to mind. The politician is often driven by ambition, pride, the desire for power (or all three in combination): base motives to some, positive motivators to others, but, in any case, motives widely shared by their fellow man. The best politicians are moved to make a difference, to get things done, to improve their communities—and, most important, not to be deterred by obstacles they find in their way: personal attacks, unending hassle, negative odds, and all the rest. Most politicians are, at least when they start out, optimists and risk-takers capable of creating a vision and living by it.

In fact, very few of us are called to activism in the political world. To those who take up the challenge of elected office, however, we owe a large measure of gratitude. Half a century ago the eminent sociologist, Max Weber, had this to say about politicians:

Only he has the calling for politics who is sure that he shall not crumble when the world from his point of view is too stupid or too base for what he wants to offer. Only he who in the face of all this can say “In spite of all!” has the calling for politics. (Weber, Gerth, Mills 1946, 128)

Politics demand personal qualities and skill-sets that differ in significant degree from those that predominate in the other professions we have examined. As a rule, politicians are less hide-bound, less rigid, and more prone to doing what is possible in an imperfect world under adverse conditions. They are, by nature (and self-selection), people who find deep satisfaction immersing themselves in the complexity of human affairs. For the most part, they genuinely like people and do not, indeed cannot, shy away from human contact. Politicians are less likely to be thrown off stride by ugly surprises; they know what it is like to be under continual attack from this quarter or that, fairly or unfairly, for what they are trying to do. They are not hothouse flowers, as academics and even diplomats sometimes tend to be. Politicians know what it is to be in the arena, down and dirty, where little goes according to the book and mud spatters all the players. This is the kind of person that a post-conflict civilian administrator needs to be: tough, resilient, hard to throw off balance. While elements of Weber’s definition of a politician can be found in both the diplomatic and military professions, neither of these callings captures the full essence of what it means to be a successful, durable politician.

Harlan Cleveland (1979), noted educator and diplomat, makes points similar to Weber’s. He focuses on the overriding importance of attitude over skills in a true leader: “[A]ttitudes...are indispensable to the management of complexity” (1979, 5). To Cleveland, a true leader embraces:

- The notion that crises are normal, tensions can be promising, and complexity is fun;
- A realization that paranoia and self-pity are reserved for people who don’t want to be executives (leaders);

- The conviction that there must be some more upbeat outcome than would result from adding together the available expert advice; and
- A sense of personal responsibility for the situation as a whole. (Ibid.)

Although written for the business executive, I find this to be an accurate description of the mindset ideally possessed by anyone seriously contemplating the sort of leadership challenge which is the topic of this book.

Carl Bildt, the first High Representative in Bosnia, was a consummate Swedish politician who taught me the value of getting out of the office, going in front of cameras and microphones, and rubbing shoulders with the people. High Representative Irish Lord Paddy Ashdown was also a seasoned politician who by all accounts preferred to be on the road rather than sitting behind his desk in Sarajevo. Both men, at different times and in different ways, managed to convey an image of caring about the people of BiH as much as about their factional leaders. As politicians, they understood the power game and how to roll with the punches. For all their acknowledged flaws and excesses, politicians are accustomed to the rough and tumble of public life and revel in it. Successful politicians know how to communicate with people. Diplomats, academicians, and civil servants, on the other hand, tend to favor the written over the spoken word, the press statement over the public speech, wholesale over retail. While there is certainly a time and place on the team for both, who would seriously quarrel with the proposition that a spoken word delivered in person before a live audience is a more powerful way of communicating than a written communiqué?

Politicians have two other attributes that set them apart from other professions: First, having been elected to public office from the ranks of the community they serve, they have an independent power (and career) base. That very power base would bestow on the politician-cum-administrator a degree of independence that would translate into a greater willingness to take risks, a necessary attribute in such unstable and high stakes circumstances. Secondly, life experience has taught politicians that any initiative they might embrace will depend for its success on the availability of funding. Without funding little can be achieved. The best politicians know instinctively how to go after—and keep after—the funds necessary to fulfill their mandate. Career diplomats and military officers are largely shielded from the necessity of pursuing funds for their work. They are often able to leave that chore to others in their organization who may not share their perception of the larger mission. This phenomenon is especially characteristic of the diplomatic service, where political officers routinely go about their work in splendid isolation from the administrative officers' need to be concerned about resources. I found the constant need to pursue funding for the Brčko mission a huge drain on my energy, time, and patience. Part of the problem was I simply did not know how to go about it. I am quite confident that an able politician/operator would have had a surer grasp of how to go about attaining operational funding more efficiently and with less frustration than I experienced. A politician would have “been there, done that.”

Thus, in my judgment, a politician, either temporarily out of office or retired from political life altogether, would be the preferred candidate to consider as leader of the civilian side of a peace operation. I believe an ex-mayor of a large- or medium-sized American city—preferably one with high rates of crime, drug use, crumbling infrastructure, poor health care, lagging schools, inner-city flight, and so on—skilled in the all-important art of coalition-building among feuding parties and groups (police vs. firefighters, Republicans vs. Democrats, social services vs. business interests, and the like) would be a far better choice to

govern a collapsed, post-conflict municipality like Brčko, Mostar, Sarajevo, Mitrovica, Baghdad, or Kirkuk than the usual suspects who are normally tapped for such functions. Indeed, I ran across a news item in the Washington Post recently reporting a conversation between then-Senator Joseph Biden (D-Del.) and Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) in which Biden is quoted as saying: “Lugar had it right five years ago...We needed to send 600 mayors to Iraq to get that country functioning again” (Broder 2008, par. 10). A perceptive insight. Is it not likely that former mayors of such cities as Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, Baltimore, and others of similar size complexity, who faced during their tenure in office every kind of urban ill would bring to the table every tested and proven skill necessary to tackle the manifold issues in post-conflict situations? The trick, of course, would be to persuade them to join the game, an issue beyond the scope of this discussion.

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