
Nelson Mandela: Partisan and Peacemaker

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To analyze Nelson Mandela's personal attributes relevant to peacemaking and negotiation, the study considers personality traits derived from biographical data rather than quantitative content analysis. Since Mandela's personality eludes ready characterization in terms of high or low levels of a given trait and also comprises traits apparently in tension, the analysis offered here highlights ostensibly opposing characteristics, and the evolution of Mandela's personal characteristics over time, with specific attention to his self-identity, interpersonal orientation, and political outlook. It identifies distinctive aspects of Mandela's peacemaking practice, as well as aspects that may be common among accomplished peacemakers and negotiators. It concludes that Mandela's seemingly contradictory personality traits and high degree of cognitive complexity enabled him to fulfill the different roles of partisan negotiator and of mediator/peacemaker; and equipped him, more so than other revolutionaries, for the transition to post-liberation leader.

P eacemaking is an activity usually identified with mediators and other third parties who do not represent any of the primary parties to a conflict. But to what extent can partisan negotiators on behalf of one party also act as peacemakers? Under what circumstances are the political struggles undertaken by social justice and pro-democracy movements compatible with

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conflict resolution, and how are the prospects for peaceful resolution of such inherently conflictual struggles affected by the personalities of leading activists or “freedom fighters”?

This essay analyzes Nelson Mandela’s approach to negotiation and peacemaking. It proposes that Mandela’s personality contains traits that are characteristic of both effective partisan political leaders and effective mediators. While recognizing that the effect of any individual on the complex process of South Africa’s transition from authoritarian rule was necessarily limited, it proposes that Mandela’s ability to combine peacemaking and partisan roles helps explain South Africa’s relatively peaceful negotiated settlement. Clearly, Mandela was not solely responsible for initiating a negotiated settlement to South Africa’s conflict. His prison talks with officials of the governing National party overlapped other “talks about talks” launched by Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki, who led the African National Congress (ANC) from exile in Zambia (Sparks 1995). Ahead of virtually all his colleagues, however, Mandela judged the moment right for, and tenaciously pursued, government-ANC negotiation. The pre-negotiation initiatives Mandela began in late 1985 toward South African government officials preceded the government’s indirect talks with the exile leadership by about two years. And while the scope for individual agents to influence the course of the conflict was narrow, micro-interactions among individuals, such as the dialogues that Mandela and other ANC leaders undertook, were needed in order to convince white elites that ANC leaders were not vengeful or committed to whites’ destruction (Lieberfeld 2002).

Mandela is distinguished even from his closest colleagues, Tambo and Walter Sisulu, by his belief in the possibility and necessity of achieving ANC goals through negotiation, and also by his charismatic qualities, including his physical presence, sense of humor, interpersonal skills, and ease in a public role. Mandela’s international renown, authoritative bearing, and penchant for outspokenness on politically sensitive issues positioned him to formulate hard truths necessary for compromise during the transition to democracy and to lead reconciliation efforts. As head of state, Mandela built bridges to Afrikaners, the mainly Dutch descended whites who, as a group, had implemented and benefited most from apartheid. With regard to what Greenstein (1967: 633) terms “action dispensability,” even as structurally-oriented a thinker as South African Communist party (SACP) leader Joe Slovo concluded that “without Mandela, South African history would have taken a completely different turn.” Trade unionist and leading ANC negotiator Cyril Ramaphosa believed that without Mandela negotiations would never have succeeded (Karis, forthcoming). Although his values derived from those of the broader ANC leadership, Mandela was particularly suited, personally and politically, to undertake peacemaking initiatives and to oversee their implementation.

In assessing individual contributions to historical events, Rustow (1970: 21) advocates focusing on processes of accession to leadership so as to avoid two fallacies:

The first is the view that the leader was indispensable to the results being obtained — leading to the inference, for example, that if Mustafa Kemal had been killed by a bullet at Gallipoli, there would have been no Turkish nation-state. The second is the opposite view, that the result was inevitable, that any other leader would have had to adopt the very same course.

Accordingly, data on Mandela's personality and its influence on his peacemaking abilities are derived primarily from the period prior to Mandela's release from prison at age 72 and his accession to South Africa's presidency four years later. To a lesser extent, the study draws on his post-presidential mediation in the Burundian civil war. The period from 1990 to 1999 in which Mandela was an official negotiator, presidential candidate, and President of South Africa is deemphasized since, in these capacities, Mandela's individual motives and initiatives are hard to isolate from the goals and decisions of the ANC leadership in general.

In his pre-negotiation initiatives while in prison and in his post-presidential Burundi mediation, Mandela was more nearly autonomous, so that analysis of these roles yields more robust evidence of his approach to peacemaking. The primary purpose here is less to offer an analysis of Mandela's contribution to the process that initiated the negotiated settlement of South Africa's civil war (see Lieberfeld 1999a, 1999b, 2000, and 2002) than to analyze the combination of characteristics that enabled Mandela to bridge the mediator and negotiator roles and to act as both peacemaker and partisan negotiator.

Methodology

Mandela's personal traits relevant to negotiator and mediator roles are derived from as complete as possible a survey of available biographical sources, and compared with the personal characteristics of effective mediators and effective negotiators derived from literature on negotiation and mediation.

Data on Mandela's early history and political career have been gathered from primary sources, particularly interviews in the media with those who know him well; from the author's original interviews; and from primary testimony contained in published biographical, autobiographical, and scholarly sources.¹ While much of this testimony shows a tendency to admire Mandela, some sources are critical and all seem to view him as a human, rather than superhuman, being. Much interview data and autobiography are "for the record," and thus biased enough to raise potential reliability problems. However, the data used here include multiple sources which can be compared for consistency, and occurrence of ambivalent or contradictory data

noted. Regarding the use of biographical sources, Etheredge (1978) and others have established the diagnostic utility of “abstracting individual traits immediately from biographic data” to link personality and political leadership (Simonton 1990: 677) and to present a broader, more complex portrait of a leader’s personality.

The literature on personality traits of effective negotiators and mediators is scanty, largely noncumulative, and mainly derived from the organizational, rather than international or intergroup, context. Existing literature nonetheless offers some guidance in correlating personal traits with negotiator and mediator effectiveness. This study also recognizes the utility of the personality categories used in the “personality-at-a-distance” (PAD) methodology developed by Margaret Hermann and colleagues (e.g., Hermann 1977 and 1987; Winter 1980; Winter et al. 1991) for classifying the personality types of leaders and their approach to political practice, including mediation and negotiation. Hermann and colleagues focus on leaders’ motivations (need for achievement, need for affiliation, and need for power); their beliefs (regarding nationalism, control over events, and self-confidence); and their cognitive and interpersonal orientations (complexity of thinking, distrust of others, and task versus interpersonal orientation). I have adopted a modified version of the PAD categories, regrouping them in terms of “self identity,” “interpersonal orientation,” and “political outlook,” which more directly relate to the individual’s approach to conflict resolution and political negotiation.

As descriptive method, however, the quantitative, unidimensional, and polar measures in PAD have difficulty capturing Mandela’s personality. Significantly, Mandela eludes ready characterization in terms of high or low levels of a given trait and also possesses ostensibly contradictory traits. For example, in terms of “task orientation,” or “relative emphasis in interactions with others on getting the task done as opposed to focusing on the feelings and needs of others” (Hermann 1987: 167), Mandela is both highly task-oriented and also solicitous of others’ feelings. Regarding “belief in nationalism,” he has adhered to both a racially defined African nationalism and a non-racial, civic nationalism. Similarly, he shows a need for affiliation and is highly sociable but is also a solitary loner.

The PAD methodology, additionally, is temporally static and does not capture a subject’s personal evolution, which is salient in Mandela’s case. In order to offset the pitfall of overestimating subjects’ cross-situational consistency and underestimating environmental or situational influences (noted by Suedfeld and Rank 1976 and Rasler et al. 1980), the study distinguishes between Mandela’s consistent traits and those that emerged over the course of his six decades in politics.

PAD analyzes subjects’ public speeches and interviews because these data exist “in great abundance” (Winter 1980: 75). Yet such speech is by definition uttered with political goals in mind, is not necessarily evidence of the personalities of the leaders, and may not even bear their authorship in the

case of speeches. Winter et al. (1991: 218-219) contend that "it may not matter whether the source was the leader or a speech writer. . . . Whatever their status, they exist as, are taken as, and have effects as the leader's words." However, this rationale seems to conflate two quite separate issues: the effect of a leader's words and their utility as an indicator of personality.

For the present study, qualitative use of primary biographical sources to elicit personality traits has distinct advantages relative to these deficiencies in PAD. Biographical data can account for ostensibly contradictory traits, which are essential to Mandela's personality. Biographical data can also highlight subjects' personal and philosophical development. Moreover, due to Mandela's confinement in prison and the laws banning him from being quoted, sources are nonexistent for Mandela's spontaneous statements during this highly formative decades-long period of his life.

Characteristics of Effective Mediators and Negotiators

In terms of self-image or self-identity, studies cite a strong sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy as desirable in both mediators and negotiators. Cross-culturally, perceived self-efficacy correlates with raised aspirations, reduced fear of failure, and improved problem-focused analytic thinking (Oettingen 1995: 169). Sense of efficacy increases willingness to persist in negotiations despite impasses and negative feedback (O'Connor and Arnold 2002). Mediators' self-confidence should be balanced by low egocentrism. Mediator William Simkin notes that "sufficient personal drive and ego, qualified by a willingness to be self-effacing" is a desirable quality in a mediator (in Raiffa 1982: 232). While mediators and negotiators need enough self-confidence to initiate proposals whose success is uncertain, impulsivity and recklessness may be a weakness. Self-discipline and patience are also desirable in that they correlate with thorough preparation for, as well as persistence in, negotiations.

Concerning interpersonal orientations, the propensity to trust others may be a liability in negotiations; however some sources suggest that a trusting attitude actually influences others to behave more forthrightly (Lewicki et al. 1994). Since mediators rely on the trust of parties, propensity to trust, if it induces reciprocation, may be considered an important quality in a mediator. Individuals with high interpersonal trust tend to have high ethical standards for themselves and to exhibit moral behavior, and are liked by peers (Rotter 1980) so that this quality may be an asset in negotiators as well.

Both mediators and negotiators require interpersonal orientation and skills; however, task orientation may be more important for negotiators than interpersonal orientation, while mediators require a fairly even balance between these qualities. Mediators should have "a fundamental belief in human values and potentials, tempered by the ability to assess personal weaknesses as well as strengths" (Simkin, in Raiffa 1982: 232). Emotional self-control (e.g., the ability to express emotional warmth, humor, and anger

tactically rather than purely spontaneously) is also characteristic of effective negotiators. Regarding mediators as well, Simkin humorously recommends possessing “the guile of Machiavelli” and “the hide of a rhinoceros” (in Raiffa 1982: 232).

Qualities that Boulie (1996) identifies with effective mediators include a capacity for empathy, or the ability to understand others’ points of view. “Working empathy” enables a negotiator to present arguments in terms that others are more likely to find persuasive. Negotiators who, lacking empathy, perceive others as very different from themselves, are less behaviorally transparent and have lower expectations of gaining compliance, making them more willing to use hard tactics and incur costs (Rao and Schmidt 1998: 670). The ability to empathize also indicates “cognitive complexity” — the tendency to analyze people, groups, policies, and ideas in differentiated terms and disinclination to monolithic views and interpretations (Hermann 1987: 167) — which is particularly important to mediators in intergroup conflicts, and may be desirable in negotiators.

In terms of political outlook, cognitive complexity may also be a foundation for nonjudgmental, nondogmatic, and practical approaches to conflict resolution. According to Simkin, mediators need “a hard-nosed ability to analyze what is available, in contrast to what may be desirable” (in Raiffa 1982: 232). Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, also associated with cognitive complexity, is often important in mediation. Finally, low interest in personal power contributes to mediators’ trustworthiness and may be an asset to partisan negotiators in that it renders them less corruptible.

Nelson Mandela’s Personal Characteristics

Self-Identity

The eldest child and only boy among his mother’s four children, Mandela was raised in a supportive family environment that fostered his self-confidence. Following the death of his father when Mandela was nine, he benefited from an extended family of surrogate parents as he was raised in the household of the king regent of the Thembu, a branch of the Xhosa people. There, Mandela was groomed for the role of adviser to the Thembu king, as his father had been. Although not in the line of succession, Mandela was treated as a son of the royal family and the adults in his early life made clear their high expectations for him.

According to George Bizos (1999), a friend and political ally since law school, Mandela, “without saying so, showed every sign, from the early ‘50s . . . that he was a man of destiny.” However, Mandela’s sense of destiny for leadership has deeper roots. When he was still in his early twenties, he expressed to a white colleague the conviction, an extraordinary one given the country’s white supremacist power structure, that he would one day be prime minister of South Africa (Meredith 1999: 39).

Self-confidence is also reflected in Mandela’s capacity for self-criticism and his active interest in learning from his own mistakes. As President, he

convened his private secretaries at the end of the day and asked them to “tell me what I have done wrong today, because I don’t want to make the same mistakes tomorrow” (Brink 1999). Self-confidence and perhaps some vanity is also apparent in the pride Mandela takes in his own appearance and his “pleasure in dressing immaculately and appropriately” (Benson 1990). When equated with “self-importance” (Hermann 1987: 167), Mandela’s self-assurance may appear paradoxical in that he also displays considerable humility. He values his sense of dignity intensely, but tolerates jokes at his expense, just as tribal political culture provided that chiefs could be criticized, even satirized. Mandela’s autobiography (1994) relates with self-deprecating humor his misadventures in romance, his deficiencies as a scholar, his lack of sophistication as a country youth new to Johannesburg, and his own son’s humorous put-downs of Mandela’s boxing efforts.

A fellow prisoner recalls, “You cannot really call it a debate to discuss issues with Mandela. Whatever you believed, you would eventually find yourself nodding your head and agreeing” (Koch 1990). Confident in his skills in persuasion and the efficacy of rational argument, Mandela, an experienced trial lawyer, sought to engage adversaries in dialogue and lead them into cooperative relations. If high government officials met with him, Mandela believed, “we could discuss our little problems and I am sure we could convince them” (in Bethel 1986: 195). Mandela notes that he and his fellow ANC prisoners

. . . adopted a policy of talking to the warders and persuading them to treat us as human beings. And a lot of them did, and there were lots of things we could talk about. And the lesson was that one of our strongest weapons is dialogue. Sit down with a man [and] if you have prepared your case very well, that man. . . will never be the same again (in Waldmeir 1998: 17).

Minister of Justice Kobie Coetsee considered their first meeting, while Mandela was hospitalized in 1985, “quite incredible”:

He acted as though we had known each other for years, and this was the umpteenth time we had met. He introduced [Chief of Prisons] Willemse and me to the two nurses and chided me for not coming to see him sooner. I remember he made a little joke about this being his ward and me being his warder. He took complete command of the situation. He was like the host. He invited us to sit down, and “General Willemse, are you comfortable and is there anything we can do for you?” (Sparks 1995: 24).

His rising regularly at 3:30 a.m. to begin the day with two hours of exercise (Bethel 1986: 192) is another sign of optimistic self-beliefs and perceived self-efficacy (e.g., Bandura 1997: 411), as well as self-discipline. From 1985 to 1990, Mandela’s sense of self-efficacy sustained his persistent efforts to transform relations with Afrikaners and to engage government offi-

cials in dialogue, despite their frequent unresponsiveness and despite ambivalence among ANC colleagues.

Mandela's sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence enabled him to negotiate with prison authorities over parochial grievances and, later, to engage the government in political dialogue. As Richard Stengel, who collaborated on Mandela's autobiography, notes (1999):

[F]rom the very beginning, when he started talking to the authorities about whether they would have long pants or short pants, whether they would have hot food or cold food, he got in the habit and the knowledge of negotiating with the enemy. . . He was very at ease talking with commissioners, with the police, and. . . that groomed him for those later negotiations. It made him feel, "This is a boxing match that I know how to handle. I know how to fight against these fellows. I know how they feint, I know how they move, and I feel confident in this arena." . . . The secret talks [with government representatives] show his incredible self-confidence, and his confidence that, "I, Nelson Mandela, can do this, in a way that no one else can."

Indeed, Mandela's self-confidence in initiating secret talks without a broader organizational mandate drew some charges of elitist flouting of the pro-democracy opposition's culture of grassroots consultation. On the other hand, Sisulu (1999) characterized Mandela's pre-negotiation initiative in prison as "one of the most outstanding courageous moments when a man is alone in the face of that situation, particularly in politics where you have got a lot of criticism from everyone. He was confident of what line he was following."

In his role as mediator in the Burundian civil war, Mandela was also criticized for being a "one-man show" and keeping the process "extremely personalized." A nongovernmental organization castigated him for "not [having] recruited a team of professional honest brokers" (International Crisis Group 2000: 16). Mandela's decision to dispense with a large third-party team did fit his preference for personalized decision making, and may have inadvertently insulated Mandela from the views of experts on Burundian society. Not having more of a team may also have complicated the transition to Mandela's successor in Burundi (South African Vice President Jacob Zuma).

Mandela's self-confidence goes together with his sense that events are, to a large degree, controllable, even in the prison environment characterized by an external locus of control. Fellow prisoner Neville Alexander (1999) recalls Mandela advocating that the prisoners think strategically about how to gain more control over their lives in prison. Envisioning an eventual victory was essential with a life sentence, and Mandela, according to Fikile Bam (1999), another fellow prisoner, "actually lived that belief more than anyone else I knew" (1999; see also Mandela 1994: 341).

A comrade from their days in the ANC Youth League, Joe Matthews (1999), recalled the younger Mandela as more of a warrior than a thinker,

“the brave chap who is ready to do anything which has danger in it. This was a fearless man who may not have considered everything.” Oliver Tambo (1965) described Mandela as “passionate, emotional, sensitive, [and] quickly stung to bitterness and retaliation by insult and patronage.” However, in prison, according to fellow ANC prisoner Mac Maharaj, Mandela made a conscious effort to master anger and impulsiveness (Ottoway 1993: 47). He cultivated patience and mastered anger. He was, according to Bam, “a very disciplined person in small things as in big things. . . .He was very disciplined in food. He always was wanting to share his own food with other people, and he never wanted to be given favors which other people couldn’t have” (1999). Mandela had always admired the imperturbability of Walter Sisulu, his political mentor in the ANC. He notes that Sisulu (nicknamed “Buddha”) “never lost his head in a crisis; he was often silent when others were shouting. . . .I knew that I would be proud to belong to any organization in which Walter was a member” (1994: 83).

In negotiations and in politics as well, Mandela is “enormously patient and part of that comes from his upbringing as a boy and seeing how the chief listened to what everyone had to say. In negotiations . . . that gave him some leverage” (Stengel 1999). According to Jessie Duarte (1999), Mandela’s personal assistant in the early 1990s, “He would always say that if you want to win a position, make sure you lay the ground very firmly.”

Mandela enjoyed checkers and chess in prison, and to his opponents’ irritation, patiently assessed all ramifications before moving (Mandela 1994: 396-97). Alexander (1999) recalls, “He would take his time with every move, he would consider it very carefully. . . .It was a war of attrition, and he tended therefore to be victorious in most cases.” Neither, Alexander reports, was Mandela above gloating over an especially good move.

Mandela’s self-identity, in sum, is characterized by a high degree of self-confidence, optimistic self-beliefs, and feelings of self-efficacy. He believes in his ability to control events, but also tolerates lack of control. He is adept at repressing feelings of fear and doubt. His belief in his own powers of persuasion motivated him to engage adversaries in dialogue. Together with his sense of destiny for political leadership, these qualities sustained his pre-negotiation initiatives with South African government officials. His deliberate mastery of his emotions and impulsivity and cultivation of patience and self-control gave Mandela a competitive edge over his adversaries and enabled him to control others’ perceptions of him.

Interpersonal Orientation

The apparent absence of personal bitterness that is often cited as “the most extraordinary thing about Mandela” (Ottoway 1993: 48) may be linked with his capacity to focus on others’ potential instead of their deficits. He was able to empathize with whites because he did not see himself primarily as their victim. (Neither was Mandela physically brutalized to the extent that many other African prisoners were.) Those warders who treated him humanely, he notes, “reinforced my belief in the essential humanity even of

those who had kept me behind bars for . . . twenty-seven and a half years” (1994: 490). Stengel (1999) concludes that Mandela does, in fact, harbor “tremendous bitterness” about how he was treated, but “his great achievement as a leader, is the ability to hide that bitterness. To show the smiling face of reconciliation, not the frown of bitterness and lost opportunity.” His self-discipline and stoicism enable him to sublimate personal hurt in service of the dignity and aspirations of the social collectivity.

Mandela’s optimistic view of human nature made even racists seem educable. He bore in mind how insulated most whites were, so that they tended to know blacks only as servants. Sisulu (1994) recalls Mandela continually seeking to educate government representatives, not only regarding the ANC’s pacific history and goals, but about how to speak with Africans as fellow human beings.

His optimism, which led poet Seamus Heaney (2001) to term him “an artist of human possibility,” also makes Mandela prone to trust others. According to Bizo (1999), Mandela “believes that everybody is a good guy. Only when people show that they are not on the level with him, he becomes very angry and can become quite scathing.” Bam (1999) concurs:

. . . he was really very slow to judge people. On the other hand, once he had the facts and had made up his mind that people were cheating, or people were being rude to him, he then really never pretended. I can remember one or two people whom he stopped greeting. . . Then you knew that that person had had it. Once he took that stance, it was quite difficult to change him around.

For Stengel, Mandela’s propensity to trust helped achieve a negotiated settlement in South Africa: “[H]e is liable to trust people that he shouldn’t trust. . . . But. . . that’s the flaw you want in a great man. . . particularly at this time” (1999).

In both his personal and political relationships Mandela is able to establish and maintain rapport. He remembers others’ personal details, such as the names of their family members (Sparks 1995: 47). Arthur Chaskalson, president of South Africa’s Constitutional Court, considers him “a very considerate and thoughtful person. He relates to people, speaks to people, is interested in people” (in Suttner 1997: 338). Alexander (1999), who often disagreed with Mandela politically, was nonetheless

impressed mainly by the warmth and the genuine interest, which was a feature that, subsequently I discovered, is very much part of the man and something which I also must admit now, I learned from him. . . to give your full attention to your interlocutor, and really take notice of what people are saying, listen to them carefully. In his case, there was a spontaneous, charismatic exuding of warmth.

However, Mandela also enjoys solitary activities such as long-distance running as a youth, gardening in prison, and early-morning walks after his

release. He notes, "Although I am a gregarious person, I love solitude even more" (1994: 232).

Mandela is attuned to others' perceptions of him and is practiced at controlling those perceptions. During his period of underground political activity Mandela needed to be aware of informants and police agents. In his autobiography he observes of life in disguise:

One has to plan every action, however small and seemingly insignificant You cannot be yourself, you must finally inhabit whatever role you have assumed. In some ways this is not much of an adaptation for a black man in South Africa. To be a black man in South Africa meant not to trust anything, which was not unlike being underground for one's entire life (1994: 232).

Mandela also controls or represses his own emotions and does not easily reveal private feelings. According to longtime friend Amina Cachalia (1999):

There's a wall that he's built between him and everybody. Sometimes he lets slip something along the way, but in most cases he's so controlled about his feelings that it's difficult to penetrate that wall. . . . He can joke and be just like ordinary people are, and yet, when it comes to a very personal thing, one would imagine that with your friends, or with your very close relation, you would let go. . . . But he doesn't.

Despite his self-control and emotional repression, Mandela's self-presentation appears sincere, spontaneous, and relaxed. According to Alexander (1999):

He's a really good actor. . . . He's a very cerebral person. . . . I have never seen him worsted really in a debate. He thinks things through very carefully, and then the force and the power of his conviction makes him spontaneous. . . . He is genuine, but it's because it's been thought through very, very carefully.

As he matured, Mandela tempered his competitive orientation so that, while still seeking to win in politics and the other competitive pursuits he enjoyed, he also prioritized maintaining good relations with his opponents. Saths Cooper, a psychologist and former leader of the rival Black Consciousness Movement who shared a cellblock with Mandela for five years, observed that Mandela was "able to get on with every person he met. He played a vital role in dampening the conflicts that broke out on [Robben] Island. Despite having ideological disagreements, he was able to maintain personal contact." A prisoner from the rival Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) noted of Mandela, "It doesn't matter if you differ, he is always polite. He never gets angry. All he will do is try to have the discussion as amicable as possible" (Koch 1990). Formerly a contentious figure in the ANC's relations with allied and rival organizations, particularly the South African Communist

party, Mandela became a bridge-builder in “hundreds of political rows” in prison between ANC members and those from rival anti-apartheid groups (Ottoway 1993: 49). He led the formation of a unified committee among the mutually hostile ANC, Pan-Africanist Congress, and Unity Movement prisoners (Bam 1999) and was also able to avert schisms among imprisoned ANC leaders.

Mandela maintained cordial personal relations with political rivals, such as Chief Kaiser Matanzima, a family relative who became an apartheid functionary, and also attended to the easily bruised pride of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a Zulu nationalist enemy of the ANC. Of Buthelezi, Mandela noted, “He was deprived of parental love and care, so he grew up with this insecurity. . . .Once you understand that, Buthelezi is a very fine person” (Keller 1994, cited in Waldmeir 1998: 159). Mandela accordingly showed Buthelezi signs of affection and approval and wrote him respectful letters from prison, despite Buthelezi’s official status within the ANC as a traitor.

While Mandela keeps rivals close to prevent their causing trouble, such pragmatic motives are hard to separate from his disposition. According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999):

I genuinely believe his magnanimity, because I would have thought that the mask would slip and that there could be moments when this is put on. But. . .when you mention somebody who is, or you thought was, a political opponent. . .and it was a confidential conversation, he would start off looking for the good points in the other guy.

During their years in prison, Mandela and other ANC leaders developed a degree of reciprocity with some of the guards, teaching the younger ones math, history, English, and even elements of their own Afrikaans language. Beyond the imperatives of survival, Mandela approached relations with guards and prison officials as a laboratory for re-negotiating race relations on a basis of mutual respect and “a microcosm of the struggle as a whole” (1994: 341). Mandela, Bam (1999) notes, therefore “put a lot of work and effort in learning to speak Afrikaans and to use it. . . .He had absolutely no qualms about greeting people in Afrikaans, and about trying his Afrikaans out on the warders.” He convinced dubious ANC comrades to do likewise, arguing:

We are in for a protracted war, which is going to be a combination of armed and political struggle. . . .[T]o wage it, you must understand the mind of the opposing commander. You can never outmaneuver him unless you understand him, and you can’t understand him unless you understand his literature and language (in Waldmeir 1998: 16).

During talks with the government, Mandela reassured Niel Barnard, the Afrikaner nationalist head of state intelligence, by greeting him in Afrikaans and allowing Barnard to speak Afrikaans during their meetings. Justice Minister Coetsee, who also participated in the meetings, recalled that Mandela

knew “more about Afrikaners’ history than many Afrikaners themselves” (in Meredith 1999: 373). Mandela reassured government representatives that African nationalism meant neither socialism or whites’ subordination, while at the same time refusing to budge from the ANC’s demands for equal political rights for all South Africans, its alliance with the SACP, or its sanctions campaign. According to a government minister who met with Mandela in prison, “The ANC’s reasonableness and lack of bitterness came across. It was clear that their priority was not to destroy their opponent” (Viljoen 1994). Mandela’s approach derived from the ANC’s strategic goal of non-racial democracy, and the related need to alleviate white South Africans’ fears of a race war.

As noted, Mandela is both task-focused and interpersonally adept. Duarte (1999) observes:

He didn’t ever want to hurt people’s feelings. He was always concernedHe has a talent to allow people to vent their anger, to put across their emotional perspective, and finally he’ll pin them down on the content issue: “The real bottom line issue that we need to discuss here is not you, your anger, where you come from, but where we all [are] going to.” His focus would be absolute on those issues. . . .He would. . .very calmly allow you to get very angry . . .and then at the end he would say, “But don’t you think that the focus of where we have to go, is X?” . . .He never is muddled in his head about what he wants. He knows exactly.

F. W. de Klerk, who headed South Africa’s last white government, considers Mandela “a very good listener . . . a man with a legal mind, coming forth, generally speaking, with reasonable replies and reactions towards requests, towards suggestions, solution orientated” (1999).

However, Alexander (1999) also considers Mandela less-than-receptive in discussions, despite his attentive appearance:

Mandela can be stubborn. I have always experienced that stubbornness more as a kind of arrogance, as an unwillingness to accept something which questions a cherished notion of his. . . .At the same time, he will obviously give the impression of listening very, very carefully, but every now and again you realize no, he hasn’t listened, because he is still coming up with the same position as before.

Mandela’s approach to discussions and decision making appeared “harsh” even to Sisulu, and another ANC colleague, Michael Dingake, who noted that “In argument against someone with insubstantial facts, Nelson can be vicious” (Meredith 1999: 294). His toughness impressed even veteran labor-union negotiator Ramaphosa, who considered Mandela:

a very stubborn man [with] nerves of steel. Once he has decided that a particular issue has to be pursued, everything else matters very little. And he can be very harsh when dealing with an opponent who is unreasonable, very brutal in a calm and collected sort of way (in Waldmeir 1998: 202-03).

In Burundi, Mandela did not hesitate to use blunt language to berate the Burundian parties “for failing their people by lacking the commitment and urgency to end the war” (in Khadiagala, forthcoming: 71) and accused absentee opposition groups of being sham rebel movements, declaring, “Those who attack civilians cannot pretend to be freedom fighters” (in Giroud 2000). He offended some of the minority Tutsis by speaking out against their monopoly on political power, and also accused leaders of some Hutu opposition groups of pursuing political ambitions to the detriment of the rest of the population. Mandela publicly praised the Hutu parties as “men of honesty and integrity” while accusing the Tutsi of “sabotaging” the peace process. “There is a section of the leadership which does not care for the slaughter of innocent people,” Mandela averred. “They were cosseted by riches and had lost touch with the realities of the civil war. I doubt there are leaders like that in any part of the world. They do not want peace. They want to drag out these negotiations for eternity” (Khadiagala, forthcoming).

In Burundi, the nongovernmental International Crisis Group accused Mandela of being “inflexible, stubborn and impervious to any advice or any external influence on his management of the peace process” (2000: 16). This complaint apparently stemmed from Mandela’s insistence that the parties sign a peace treaty by a deadline Mandela had imposed. Mandela threatened to resign if the parties delayed, and also applied international pressure by inviting about 50 African and Western heads of state to a signing ceremony, even while negotiations were ongoing. The Burundian factions did, in fact, sign an agreement in August, 2000. While Burundians and international donors have complained that Mandela imposed an agreement on reluctant parties, most Burundian factional leaders accept that the agreement Mandela mediated was beneficial, on balance, and that, had Mandela not imposed deadlines and pressures, the parties might well have kept talking indefinitely.

Mandela has been critical of his own children’s seeming deficits of education and ambition. His political commitment entailed the loss of his family life. Even before he went to prison he ruefully recalls his son wondering “Where does Daddy live?” (1994: 104). His first and second marriages broke up at least indirectly because of his political activities. While Mandela was in prison his estranged eldest son who, like his siblings, resented his father’s absence, died in a car accident without their having reconciled. Like Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X, Mandela not only faced threats of death and confronted repressive violence, but also suffered when his family was attacked. Ultimately, he was willing to risk personal relationships for important political principles or goals and concluded, apropos of having played Creon in a prison production of *Antigone*, that “obligations to the people take precedence over loyalty to an individual” (1994: 397).

Mandela’s interpersonal orientation, then, contains several seeming contradictions. He is both sociable and solitary. While he is able to express emotion spontaneously, his high degree of emotional self-control allows him

to be emotionally unrevealing and to control others' perceptions of him. He is prone to trusting others and maintains good personal relations with adversaries, but is unforgiving when betrayed and can also behave harshly toward adversaries, and even toward allies with whom he disagrees. He is competitive, but also has a capacity for "working empathy" and an ability to gain a deep understanding of an adversaries' worldview and culture. He is interpersonally attuned, charismatic, and able to establish rapport easily, in part by emphasizing commonalities. At the same time, he is highly task-oriented and goal-focused, and is ultimately willing to risk personal relationships, including family ones, in service to the ANC organization and its political objectives.

Political Outlook

As a young man, Mandela was drawn to exclusive African nationalism because, as he writes, "I was angry at the white man, not at racism" (1994: 98). Early in Mandela's life, a white official deprived his father of his tribal position and the family's income. After he moved to segregated Johannesburg, Mandela was motivated to fight white supremacy because the system threatened to disempower him and limit his own potential accomplishments, and because it affronted his sense of fairness and personal dignity. He joined the ANC when he saw "that it was not just my freedom that was curtailed, but the freedom of everyone who looked like I did" (1994: 543).

Mandela, in his late twenties, began to emerge as a flexible thinker capable of adjusting his beliefs in light of new or dissonant information. Sisulu (1999) notes, "I was encouraged by [his] flexibility, by his ability to change." For example, when South Africans of Indian heritage mobilized against racially discriminatory laws in 1946, Mandela began to consider them allies in the liberation struggle and to move toward a nonracial sense of nationalism (1994: 90).

After his release from prison, Mandela made reconciliation and "binding the wounds of the country" his priority. As president he made his nonracialist outlook consistent with his political practice, forming the first integrated cabinet, and becoming a potent symbol of racial reconciliation. Mandela's appearance at the 1995 Rugby World Cup finals wearing the jersey of the captain of South Africa's national team — long a symbol of Afrikaner nationalism — was part of a larger strategy of nation-building aimed at getting the "white" rugby team accepted by the black majority. When South Africa won the championship, Mandela "said it was one of the happiest moments of his life.... It was the country's moment in history that would unite every South African" (Duarte 1999). Pragmatically, he also recognized that the Afrikaners could sabotage any solution from which they felt excluded.

Mandela's nondogmatic approach to politics is manifest in his tolerance for disparate ideologies and practices. At the "Rivonia Trial," in which the state found him and other ANC leaders guilty of sabotage and conspiracy to overthrow the government, Mandela stated that he had concluded that "in my search for a political formula, I should be absolutely impartial and objec-

tive. . . I must leave myself free to borrow the best from the West and from the East” (Mandela 1964).

Mandela’s eclecticism is also evident in his religious belief and practice. Educated in Protestant missionary schools and still regarding himself as a member of the Methodist Church into which his mother introduced him, he nonetheless “never missed a service” by any of the various Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, and Dutch Reformed Church officials who visited the penal colony at Robben Island (Meredith 1999: 316; see also Mandela 1994: 393-95). Mandela highlights commonalities among the central tenets of the world’s religions and does not disdain tribal ritual and belief (in Villa-Vicencio 1996: 147-48).

Besides diverse intellectual and spiritual influences, Mandela’s experience encompasses rural and urban culture, as well as poverty and privilege. His aristocratic upbringing, whose privileges he renounced by running away, is balanced by an intimate knowledge of hunger acquired when as a legal apprentice he looked forward to one hot meal a week, a handout from his landlord. While in hiding, Mandela impersonated an uneducated laborer so that apparently not even his African co-workers saw through his disguise (1994: 243-44).

Within the ANC Mandela has been both a staunch party loyalist and, crucially, willing to contravene party policy. A “good organization man” (Ottoway 1993: 161) who suppresses his own preferences when overruled, Mandela nonetheless led the ANC Youth League in ousting an inactive ANC president in 1949. And while in prison, he initiated secret talks with the government while only minimally informing the rest of the ANC leadership. As Sisulu (1999) notes, Mandela’s solo attempt to make dialogue a *fait accompli* before it could be vetoed by ANC colleagues “had the possibility of undermining his leadership.”

His independent contacts with the government provide an interesting counterpoint to the dictum Mandela learned from the Thembu regent that “a leader is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go on ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that they are being directed from behind” (1994: 19). By contrast, Mandela comments, “There are times when a leader must move out ahead of the flock, off in a new direction, confident that he is leading his people the right way” (1994: 458-59; see also Villa-Vicencio 1996: 150). Leadership for him consists of acting on the insight that the time is right for a new policy initiative, and directing one’s constituents while remaining responsive to their needs and preferences.

Mandela asserts that politics is primarily a means to social justice and, “[m]y final commitment is to liberation, not power” (in Villa-Vicencio 1996: 157). Given his position in the ANC, Mandela knew that he would play an important role in South Africa’s liberation struggle but, according to Bam (1999), “he had no personal ambitions of power.” Bizo (1999) reports,

Mandela “is not an egotist. I have hardly ever heard him, when discussing political matters, to say ‘I.’ It is always ‘we’ or ‘my organization,’ or ‘the liberation movement.’” Duarte (1999) notes that, despite his celebrity, Mandela “wasn’t spoiled by adoration, because he didn’t see himself as being the one who was being adored. He understood himself as being the [ANC’s] representative.” A foreign visitor to Mandela in prison reported, “he was at pains to point out that his own authority derived solely from his position within the organization, and in so far as he was able to reflect the popular will” (Commonwealth Group 1986: 68).

The Arusha Accord, the framework agreement that Mandela arranged in Burundi in 2000, was, like most other such settlements including South Africa’s own, an elite pact regarding the distribution of political power, with civil society mainly excluded from the bargaining. To the extent that Mandela influenced the agreement’s focus on demobilization of forces and their reintegration into national army, and on amnesty for combatants, this may reflect Mandela’s sense of pragmatism rather than an elitist orientation.

In conclusion, Mandela is ideologically eclectic, and synthesizes divergent political and religious philosophies. His approach to politics is nondogmatic and pragmatic. His elite background, tempered by a diversity of life experience, may predispose him toward elite-centered negotiations as a means of resolving political conflicts; however, in the case of South Africa in the 1980s, and also in Burundi, there were few, if any, other organized centers of power that could have been usefully included in negotiations.

The evolution of Mandela’s nationalist beliefs and his retention of a sense of ethnic nationalism alongside nonracial African nationalism, indicate cognitive or conceptual complexity. Stengel (1999) credits the prison experience with heightening Mandela’s ability to see the world in complex terms:

There were so many times when I was . . . interviewing him, and in effect his answer was, “both.” It’s never just one reason, or this or that reason. It’s always some combination, and what happened to him on [Robben] Island, in a way, is that he began to see things in the round, in three dimensions Nobody is all good or all evil. Nobody operates purely out of selfish motives, or purely out of unselfish motives. It gave him a more rounded view of humanity and life. That. . . is his maturity — that he sees things from both sides.

Mandela shows intense dedication and loyalty to the ANC as an organization, but when convinced of the inadequacy of a policy (e.g., unwillingness to initiate negotiations with the government), he is willing to challenge or to circumvent an insufficiently proactive leadership. As a leader he seeks to guide constituents without calling attention to the guiding role. He is also wary of moving too far ahead of constituents. Last, political power is not an end in itself, but a means to social justice. His disinterest in personal wealth and power makes him incorruptible.

Conclusions

In his youth and early political career Mandela fit the profile of a “pre-takeover revolutionist” (Suedfeld and Rank 1976), characterized by undifferentiated thinking and conceptual simplicity. In a transformation wrought mainly during his more than 27 years in prison, during which he reconciled factions and effectively acted as a quasi-governmental leader, Mandela developed ideological flexibility. As Suedfeld and Rank (1976: 171-72) note:

A government in power must function at a complex level in order to solve the numerous and complicated problems that confront it. Generally, there is no longer a single overriding enemy, various factions must be reconciled and conciliated, policies must be based on diverse considerations in complex interactions, and both ideology and practice must be flexible and adaptable to dynamic events.

Cognitive complexity equipped Mandela, more so than many other revolutionaries, for the transition to post-liberation leader. The same capacity for complexity enabled Mandela to fulfill the different roles of nationalist leader/competitive negotiator and of mediator/integrative negotiator.

The keys to Mandela’s character and peacemaking success are his contrasting yet compatibly integrated qualities. As Stengel (1999) observes, “All statements about him worked both ways. Every positive statement has its negative; every negative statement has its positive.” These dual characteristics are reflected in his apparently incongruous roles as mediator and bridge-builder on the one hand, and as partisan politician and competitive negotiator on the other.

Some of Mandela’s traits indicate a cooperative and integrative orientation, particularly his low interest in personal power and sympathy for the less powerful, interpersonal emphasis, low egocentrism, high trust in others, tolerance for lack of control, incorruptibility, cognitive complexity, and civic nationalism. Mandela’s autobiography also conveys a retrospective understanding that at certain critical junctures in his youth — for example, in his conflicts with his guardian and with the university official who expelled him — he had, in his impetuosity, left potential compromises unexplored. His approach to his 27-year imprisonment as an iterative, multi-issue negotiation with Afrikaner authorities entailed the use of integrative tactics on substantive matters as well as unyielding ones.

By contrast, others among Mandela’s characteristics indicate a competitive or positional negotiator, or a political mobilizer: e.g., assuming a leadership role in a nationalist cause defined partly in racial terms, emotional control, task emphasis, high self-confidence and sense of destiny, strategic planning and goal-orientation, belief in control over events, personal charisma, and competitive orientation. His success in using slowdowns to combat work quotas on Robben Island convinced Mandela of the virtue of standing fast in dealings with Afrikaner authorities (Ottoway 1993: 48), and

the profiles of Mandela prepared by corrections officials and government psychologists evince distress and amazement that “he never seemed to give an inch throughout those years” (Sampson 1999). Once engaged in negotiations leading up to the 1994 elections, Mandela adopted a hard, positional approach to bargaining with then-President F. W. de Klerk and his National party.

The traits that make Mandela an effective integrative mediator — such as self-confidence, expertise in persuasive debate, patience and persistence, self-control, authoritative bearing, empathetic capacities, and ability to win others’ confidence and respect — also make him a formidable positional negotiator when combined with his competitive orientation, toughness, and ability to use emotions tactically.

To what extent is Mandela representative of a “peacemaker personality”? Mandela differs from iconic peacemakers such as Desmond Tutu or Martin Luther King in that he is a partisan politician, at home in the competitive world of bureaucratic and party politics. And while Mohandas Gandhi, King, and Tutu mobilized support for liberation movements on the basis of religion, Mandela has never been a prophet, holy man, or, despite profound personal sacrifice, a religious martyr. Nor is he a pacifist: Abandoning nonviolent protests against apartheid when he judged them ineffective in 1960 (after the government outlawed the ANC and shot nonviolent demonstrators at Sharpeville), he formulated and helped implement a campaign of sabotage and, eventually, guerrilla warfare. However, he was prepared to abandon the “armed struggle” whenever the government accepted direct negotiations with the ANC.

As outlined here, aspects of Mandela’s self-identity, interpersonal orientation, and political outlook distinguish him as both a peacemaker and political leader. The question of whether other accomplished peacemakers share this combination of mediator and negotiator characteristics deserves further study, yet some speculation may be warranted concerning the degree to which central elements of Mandela’s peacemaking style may be applicable to peacemakers generally. Eminent peacemakers — including both leaders of national liberation and pro-democracy movements, such as Gandhi, Aung San Su Kyi of Burma, or Kim Dae Jung of South Korea, and politically independent religious officials engaged in such struggles, such as King, Tutu, Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo of East Timor, or the Dalai Lama — tend to share certain characteristics. First, by defining their political beliefs and objectives in universal, rather than particularistic, terms, and through their written and spoken appeals to principles of universal human rights, peacemakers gain moral legitimacy and worldwide support for their movements. Second, they demonstrate their willingness to pay a high personal price for their beliefs by resisting repression at the risk of death and imprisonment. Third, insofar as figures such as Mandela or Xanana Gusmao of East Timor undertook campaigns of sabotage or guerrilla warfare, they convincingly argued that they had exhausted nonviolent options, and that violent tactics were used mini-

mally and only as a last resort. Fourth, such peacemakers respond to the fears and needs of rival groups by defining liberation in terms that include oppressors along with the oppressed, and by advocating inter-group reconciliation.

In Mandela's case, cognitive complexity allows him to disagree with adversaries while acknowledging the reality of their fears and the necessity of addressing them. While not retreating from core ANC demands, Mandela affirmed to President P. W. Botha in a 1989 letter that any solution needed to address the minority's fears as well as the majority's aspirations. (Mandela employed a similar formula in Burundi.) His understanding of Afrikaners' ethnic nationalism enabled him to empathize with his adversaries for purposes of strategic analysis. In negotiations, this meant accepting Afrikaners' "indigeneness" and their desire for cultural autonomy. Mandela's belief that he and his adversaries are dispositionally alike motivates him to create interpersonal rapport, to rely on reasoned argument and analogies that appeal to the other's experience. The success of his transition from revolutionary leader to unifying symbol of reconciliation derives from his complementary traits, characteristic of both a partisan politician and an integrative mediator.

NOTES

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1. Direct quotations of individuals were derived from both print and electronic sources as well as from the author's own interviews. Thus, direct quotations without page citations are from electronic or audio sources, all of which are listed in the references section.

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