Framing the interplay of (mis)leadership and (mis)followership
challenges and responsibilities


Introduction (reproduced from main paper)

The challenges of the future are widely acknowledged to be complex. Whilst people, including potential leaders, are increasingly well informed, it is not clear that information alone is sufficient to respond effectively to the foreseen challenges and to those that may emerge unexpectedly (cf. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable, 2007).

The need for appropriate leadership is also widely acknowledged -- as are controversial assessments of global leadership in respect of intervention in Iraq and of non-intervention in regions where wholesale massacre continues unabated on the largest scale since World War II. Such strategic decisions may be interpreted as skillful leadership or misleadership otherwise to be characterized as incompetence. However it is also the case that strategic leadership calls for the ability to mislead opponents in order to outmaneuver them, notably through surprise. Where followers cannot be fully informed of the strategy in order to maintain surprise, or where they cannot be expected to fully comprehend a complex strategy dependent on a wide range of factors, leadership also requires skillful misleadership of followers.

The following argument explores the interplay between such dimensions of leadership and misleadership. It is not an apology for misleadership and seeks to avoid entrapment in a binary logic defining leadership as necessarily “good” and misleadership as necessarily “bad”. It seeks to raise the question of what is to be learnt from the different framings of the Iraq debacle -- for leaders and for followers. Will the capacity to respond be more appropriate on the next occasion?

This exploration develops arguments of an earlier paper (Sustainability through the Dynamics of Strategic Dilemmas -- in the light of the coherence and visual form of the Mandelbrot set, 2005) and its annexes (Psycho-social Significance of the Mandelbrot Set: a sustainable boundary between chaos and order, 2005; Imagination, Resolution, Emergence, Realization and Embodiment: iterative comprehension ordered via the dynamics of the Mandelbrot set, 2005). It also points to the significance of traditional strategic insights from Asian cultures.

In the light of the above factors, the purpose of the paper is to frame the question of whether the present times are seeing the emergence of what amounts to a Global Misleadership Council. Whether or not this is the case, how should appropriate misleadership be cultivated, and distinguished that of a more incompetent or malevolent form? What then are the complementary considerations for misfollowership under different forms of misleadership?

Leaders vs Followers

Whilst much can be achieved through leadership, there are dangers in “delegating” to leaders functions which should be carried out by others (as the debate on subsidiarity has demonstrated in the European Union). For then the leadership engages in activities which distract from less tangible functions, and the ability to perform the more tangible functions becomes valued more than the skills in the less tangible ones. These lead to a confusion of leadership with competence and followership with incompetence.

In the fluid social structures of the future, the challenge will be to work with shifting patterns of assertion and denial, of leadership and
followership. It is how the many forms of assertion and denial are configured together which offers a way forward, not the tendency to deplore denial as the favoured scapegoat for the 1990s. The assertion-denial complementarity needs to be reframed as a resource whose paradoxical qualities define the door to a genuinely sustainable future.

Sustainable communities, emerging through processes of self-organization, may turn out to be based on complex forms of co-dependency, defined by many complementary forms of assertion and denial, as phases in a dynamic learning process. When does such co-dependency impede sustainability as opposed to enabling it? In such a community functions of leading and following may need to be constantly redistributed, in relation to assertion and denial, in ways that remain to be understood.

![Figure 10: Dynamic relationships between Leaders and Followers](image)

The many possibilities of this shifting pattern are suggested by Table 1. The cells of the table are clustered into four zones each of which includes those at a lower level (so that Zone III includes behaviour characteristic of Zones I and II):

I. "Consensual": Here consensus is emphasized, as in any fire-fighting situation. There is no cause for reservations or denial. In the form of declarations and agreements, this mode is the goal of many international initiatives, notably those which are most simplistic or fanatical. Efforts at a global ethic aspire to this condition.

II. "Schizoid": This is exemplified by situations in which emphasis is placed on agreement in public debate (as in a conference plenary) with reservations and denials being expressed "in the corridors" (or possibly the reverse). This is more clearly recognized in Eastern cultures where there is as much sensitivity to what is said as to what is not said (of the Japanese distinction between *tatame* and *honme*, between the explicitly stated and the unspoken realities). It leads to conditions in which people say one thing and do something different -- typical of the more cynical at many international conferences. There is little ability to manage both assertion and denial simultaneously as Peter Scott-Morgan (1994) demonstrates in the case of vain efforts to implement rational strategies whilst neglecting the unwritten rules of any organization. There is a particular problem when both leaders and followers are in denial.

III. "Inconsistent!": With the ability in this zone to work flexibly and simultaneously with both assertion and denial, from which moments of assertion or denial may emerge as appropriate. This can easily take the form of equivocation and fickleness, or be seen as such. There is a particular problem when both leaders and followers equivocate.

IV. "Transcendent": In this zone there is an ability to avoid being trapped by either assertion or denial, or by the vacillation between them characteristic of Zone III. From the perspective of this zone ("neither confirming nor denying"), there is greater ability to navigate as appropriate between the options presented by Zones I, II and III. Especially challenging is the condition in which both leaders and followers are able to avoid either assertion or denial. It is the desirability of this condition which is "hidden" within the widespread obsession with simplistic forms of consensus characterized by Zone I. This zone captures some of the richness associated with David Bohm's explicate and implicate orders interrelated through a holomovement.

The zones correspond to a progression from the necessarily simplistic consensus of Zone I through various higher orders of consensus in which denial is embodied in some way. Clearly of major importance is the extent to which leaders and followers are "in phase" within any one zone, as reflected by the cells on the diagonal. The out of phase conditions typical of most challenges to governance (and confidence artistry) are represented through cells off the diagonal as well as to a richer range of social problems. In contrast, in the responses typical of Zones I or II, consensus tends to be very narrowly focused and much of wider significance is ignored.

It is appropriate to note that Eastern philosophies of governance, typified by the *Ching*, would articulate the pattern of Table I in greater detail to give 64 cells. Indeed its coding system (of hexagrams of complete and broken lines) can be seen as a representation of a dynamic system of complementary combinations of light and shadow (assertion and denial) whereby ruler and people can be related. The progression to higher orders of consensus, through which possibilities of integrating the shadow are embodied, can also be related to the much-cited sequence of "ox-herding" pictures central to Zen Buddhism. The Eastern attitude would however downplay any such linear progress in favour of recognition of the complementarity of the roles played by all conditions represented in Table I or in the *Ching* pattern. This is exemplified by Chuang Tzu:

"When man understands only one of a pair of opposites, or concentrates only on a partial aspect of being, then clear expression becomes muddled by mere word play, affirming this one aspect and denying all the rest....The wise man therefore sees that on both sides of every argument there is both right and wrong. ’"
Misleadership and misfollowership as characteristics of faith-based governance?
The dynamics of question and response on this matter has been the subject of comment over centuries. The issue has been epitomized by Karl Marx's alleged maxim that religion is the "opium of the people" -- perhaps now to be framed as "weapons of mass distraction". Contrary views are currently evident in the debate over "intelligent design" and the teaching of evolution.

Faith-based governance is intimately related to the pattern of crusades and jahds -- and the many current faith-based conflicts around the world. It inspires suicide bombing and legitimates cluster bombing. It has been central to the belief in weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the manipulation of evidence in support of their purported existence.

A number of current studies document what might be caricatured as a direct correlation between religious belief and losing -- whether by leaders or by followers (cf Richard Dawkins, _The God Delusion_, 2006; Christopher Hitchens, _God is not Great: how religion poisons everything_, 2007).

The effect of such critiques on believers is marginal and in no way affects their commitment or the emergence of new patterns of faith-based governance (cf _Future Challenge of Faith-based Governance_, 2003). Indeed useful arguments may be made in support of the extent to which the efficacy of any preferred alternative is itself but another belief meriting analogous criticism (with regard to their "priesthoods", manipulation of evidence, groupthink, demonization of dissidents, complicity in malfeasance, etc).

Image makeovers for misleaders

The phenomenon of misleadership is accompanied by a variety of consistent processes through which such misleadership can be denied, concealed or "reframed", whether by followers, dissidents or opponents. Examples include:

- **Ministerial immunity**: It is standard practice for leaders of a country to be granted immunity against charges of malfeasance during the execution of their duties during the period of their mandate. Only exceptionally are steps taken to impeach them, as in the celebrated cases of Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton. Many leaders are accused of having abused their position of power -- or are indicted for doing (as in such prominent cases as Jacques Chirac, Silvio Berlusconi, and Helmut Kohl). A surprising proportion of elected representatives have some form of criminal record -- one of the preoccupations of _Global Integrity_ and Transparency International.

- **Diplomatic immunity**: It is also widespread practice, formalized in international treaties, to accord diplomatic immunity to representatives of foreign governments, whether with regard to trivial matters (such as parking violations or on criminal charges).

- **Legacy preoccupations and "clearing one's name"**: Irrespective of formal accusations, many leaders are much concerned to frame their activities after the fact through institutions, foundations, "good works", libraries or commissioned biographies.

- **Suppression of criticism**: Increasingly it is expected that legislation may preclude many forms of published criticism (notably on the web), especially of leaders and former leaders.

- **Awards**: Reception of awards and participation in bodies recognizing "good works" are among the devices to enhance an otherwise tainted image. Awards have been most controversial when -- or "negotiated" -- in the case of some individuals considered to be deeply implicated in some forms of misleadership (as with the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to _Henry Kissinger_ in 1973 and to _Yasser Arafat_ in 1994).

- **Conversion**: In an era of faith-based governance, religious conversion (and associated absolution of sins) is a common mechanism through which a line may be drawn under the past to enable the person to move on. This is a notable possibility in the case of evangelical Christians, irrespective of their participation in questionable military or other initiatives (cf _Strategic Opportunities of the Twice Born: reflections on systemic camouflage of mass deception_, 2004).

  - **Jimmy Swaggart**: The case of this prominent televangelist, caught consorting with a prostitute in 1988 is examined by Michael J. Giuliano ( _Thrice Born: the rhetorical comeback of Jimmy Swaggart_, 2002). By analyzing his sermons, letters, and magazine articles Giuliano seeks to discover the rationale that Swaggart offered his doctrinal community to justify the claim, that he was worthy of forgiveness and continued support -- namely that he was not a fault for his actions, that his actions could be accurately be blamed on other individuals and the entire ordeal would lead to an improved Swaggart. Giuliano demonstrates that such rhetorical strategies are not unique to Swaggart, but are common to the defence made by any celebrity faced with the fact of scandal.

  - **Tony Blair**: A contrasting example is offered in the case of his conversion to Catholicism following 10 years of office in which (through deception) he notably committed forces into military action in which numerous civilian lives were lost. It might be said that (like George Bush) he placed his belief in God above all other considerations, including such loss of life. Conversion ensures absolution for any sins of misleadership (namely use of "white spirit" as a deeper cleansing agent in contrast to the "white wash" of the "spin" for which his government was renowned!). It should be noted that the Catholic Church offers the further possibility of posthumous, fast-track canonization, especially if it can be demonstrated that he performed miracles and suffered martyrdom. Clearly his role in conducting crusades against "infidels" is not in question. Web sources note numerous references to his miracles, notably in Northern Ireland (and despite recognized complicity of his forces in dubious acts). Ironically his new position, with an office in Jerusalem, greatly increases his vulnerability to what may well then be described as martyrdom.

Principles of misleadership

In the light of the above arguments and examples, the question is how the principles of misleadership are to be understood -- whether intended, experienced or interpreted as "appropriate" or "inappropriate". Inappropriate forms may of course be subsequently understood
as having triggered valued learnings -- then making them appropriate? What are the sources of any relevant "principles"? Possibilities include:

- **Political misleadership** possibly associated with misrepresentation
  - News management and spin
  - Negative campaigning
  - Demonising opponents and dissidents


- **Military misleadership**
  - **Military deception** understood as actions executed to deliberately mislead adversary military decisionmakers as to friendly military capabilities, intentions, and operations, thereby causing the adversary to take specific actions (or inactions) that will contribute to the accomplishment of the friendly mission. The five categories distinguished are: strategic military deception, operational military deception, tactical military deception, service military deception, military deception in support of operations security. The use of decoys is notable in this process -- misleading others into making a false assumption.
  - Deceiving allies and subordinates

There is necessarily an extensive literature on the art of deception in military strategy and its use in different wars -- from the earliest times (Jon Latimer, *Deception in War*, Overlook Press, 2001; Mark Johnson and Jessica Meyeraan, *Military Deception: hiding the real, showing the fake*, USAF Joint Forces Staff College, 2003). For example the US Joint Doctrine for Military Deception (1996 / 2006) provides "fundamental guidance and principles for the planning and execution of military deception at the combatant command and/or subordinate joint force level".

- **Business misleadership**
  - Deceiving the competition
  - Deceiving partners and stockholders
  - Deceiving employees
  - Deceiving customers

Although a degree of deception is traditionally held to be part of the art of doing business, some constraints are typically articulated (Lynn Sharp Paine and Christopher M. Bruner, *Deception in Business: a legal perspective*, Harvard Business, 12 July 2005; Alexander Hill, *Dishonesty and Deception in Business*, 1997)

- **Misrepresentation in media and advertising**
  - With the deliberate or inadvertent purpose of mis-selling
  - With the purpose of discrediting competing products and services

There are many studies on these phenomena (cf *Misleading Media*, 2003). For example, On the proposed takeover of the *Wall Street Journal* by the Murdoch empire, Professor of Economics at Princeton University, Paul Krugman (*The Murdoch Factor, New York Times*, 29 June 2007):
  - Mr. Murdoch’s people rarely make flatly false claims. Instead, they usually convey misinformation through innuendo
  - When all else fails, Mr. Murdoch’s news organizations simply stop covering inconvenient subjects.
  - If Mr. Murdoch does acquire The Journal, it will be a dark day for America’s news media -- and American democracy. If there were any justice in the world, Mr. Murdoch, who did more than anyone in the news business to mislead this country into an unjustified, disastrous war, would be a discredited outcast. Instead, he’s expanding his empire.

- **Misleadership in statistics**. There is extensive commentary on misleading use of socio-economic data (Robert Korn, *Misleading Statistics*). Intergovernmental organizations are notably susceptible to pressures from their member governments to mislead (cf *China Pressured World Bank to Cut Deadly Pollution Figures*, 2007; *Q and A: Eurostat scandal*, BBC, 25 September 2003)

- **Misleadership in any form of education**, such as to elicit enlightenment through learning experiences based on inappropriate assumptions

Claims could readily be made by the leaders of sects, cults and religions that processes held by others to be manipulative are designed to facilitate insight.

- **Misleadership in flirtation and courtship**:
  - Leading people on in the much-celebrated wiles of courtship
  - Role of pretence (ignoring the other when attracted) and the use of cosmetics to create a misleading impression
  - Promises, including those made to be broken

A considerable amount of attention is devoted to this theme (*Truth About Deception: an honest look at deception, love and romance, Websites Related to Love, Deception, and Romance, Sources and References on Deception, Infidelity, Love and Romance*). Mario F. Heilmann (*Social evolution and social influence: selfishness, deception, self-deception*) suggests that "the large expense of time in courtship is due to the arms race between deception and attempts to foil deception". It is ironic that a process so fundamental to social relationships, and the perpetuation of the species, should be based on deception and misleading the other -- and framed as pleasurable.

**Misleadership and misfollowership training for potential followers?**

Given the strong case, so widely made, for leadership training and enhancing capacity to detect and promote those with natural leadership qualities, it would seem appropriate to explore the need for a corresponding degree of training in followership. This should of course include development of skills to recognize and respond to misleadership and tendencies to mislead.
Examples of such training include:

- education in critical thinking as a means of responding to misleading arguments
- a focus on "deprogramming" in response to misleading initiatives by religious groups, sects, and other ideological programmes

There is less formal focus on the needs for training to respond appropriately:

- misleading advertising in support of mis-selling
- misleading news management to negatively frame opposing viewpoints and to positively frame supporting viewpoints

It is possible that newly developed brain scan technology, capable of detecting intentions and dispositions before they manifest in practice, could be used to guard against the emergence of (mis)leaders before they acquire positions of undue power (Ian Sample, *The Brain Scan that can Read People's Intentions*, Guardian, 9 February 2007).

Currently the use of such technology has only been envisaged in relation to interrogation of those suspected of criminal or terrorist tendencies -- possibly extended to dissidence of any kind. But, for the benefit of followers, there may be a case for its use on any seeking election or nomination to positions of authority -- whether in governments, international institutions or in religious movements -- especially given the degree of corruption now evident in international decision making. Such possibilities raise the question of how the scandal leading to resignation of the European Commission (or that in Eurostat) might have been avoided by use of such techniques. Clearly leaders dependent on followers could well see the advantage of such techniques when hiring or promoting people in positions of confidence -- as an extension of the current use of polygraph testing on people with high levels of security clearance.

Of potentially greater significance is the need for training of followers of one worldview in:

- misfollowership, understood in the particular sense of ceasing to follow leaders acting inappropriately. Arguably this is the missing training that might have proved to be historically significant in the case of Adolf Eichmann and of Kofi Annan. It is the much debated issue of when and how the requirements of leadership should be set aside. The issue is much debated with regard to guidance for whistleblowing. More generally it relates to the issue of how dissidence should be expressed, especially now that it may be framed within anti-terrorist legislation and action legitimated against extremism of any form (*Norms in the Global Struggle against Extremism "rooting for" normalization vs. "rooting out" extremism?* 2005). In the more extreme case it might be extended to include the case of training offered by some governments to the dissident forces within other countries.
- misleadership, understood in the particular sense of how followers of one movement of opinion may be persuaded by deception (in their best interest) to adopt another worldview. There is a range of precedents from infiltration of the organizations articulating views considered inappropriate, through various form of proselytism, to flirty fishing as practiced by the Children of God (1974 until 1987).

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