

Good example of golda meir's career and leadership style essay

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Born in Russia into an impoverished family in 1898, Golda Meir endured a difficult early life, before moving to Milwaukee in 1906. She developed an interest in Zionism and socialism, which drove her to immigrate to Palestine. She was driven to make an impact, even at the lowest levels of society, both at a personal and other level. At just 14, for instance, she ran away to stay with her sister, before moving out two years on to stay with her sister's friend, following an argument. Moved by her mother's plight, she moved back home, where she came face to face with people fleeing persecution from Palestine. It is said that she only chose to get married after her husband promised that they would move to Palestine, and as perhaps best evidenced by her zeal and determination to join, and render herself useful at the Kibbutz Merhavia, which marked her apart.

Golda had some personal qualities that are uncharacteristic of most leaders, but which were critical to her rise to the top, even though some argue that she benefitted from being a pioneer and opportunities. Her impulsiveness, lack of consideration for her personal life, myopic vision, intransigence, overconfidence and dogged determination, which ultimately proved to her ruin, were instrumental in building her career. Upon her death, Henry Kissinger described her as "very stubborn, very sentimental, very passionate, [and] very courageous". One of her bitterest critics, Uri Avneri described her as being completely intolerant, disdainful for contrary opinions and kind of primitive, so much so that they were strengths. In 1928 for instance, she faced a deteriorating marriage, but instead chose to accept a job with the women's labour council of Histadrut that took her away from home, mostly. As a member of the executive committee of Histadrut (which

she joined in 1934), she seized the opportunity created after most of the Zionist leaders in Palestine were arrested to provide leadership, assuming responsibility for negotiations with the British government and coordinating political leadership with the armed guerrilla movement. Her uncharacteristic leadership/personal qualities allowed her to thrive in environments of uncertainty, without structure and precedent. In the throes of Israel's independence, she was instrumental in the negotiations and crucially, helped in raising funds that allowed the young state to repulse invasions by its Arab neighbours.

With regard to her leadership style, Golda Meir exhibited qualities that are consistent with transactional and situational leadership styles. According to Giltinane (2013), transactional leaders offer rewards in return for compliance. Such leaders focus on identifying the team's share values and the accomplishment of managerial tasks, which is extremely effective in meeting deadlines, emergencies and in conditions of relative certainty. At the close of the 1967 war for instance, Meir maintained that any future territorial concessions could only occur if Arab nations were prepared to negotiate cooperatively, without which Israel maintained hold over the occupied territories.

Having served as minister plenipotentiary to Moscow (until 1949), labour minister (until 1956) and foreign minister (until 1966), she was centrally involved in major events that have shaped the modern Israel nation, including the Second Arab-Israeli War. She briefly retired from politics in 1966 due to ill health and exhaustion, only to return in order to prop up Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol. His sudden death saw her become Prime

Minister. Her relentless commitment to the Jewish state and active role as a member of the government was considerable. Meir's primary motivation was her unwavering commitment to her ideological beliefs. She had a coherent system of political values that shaped her government policy, mainly informed by the importance of foreign policy. Particularly, the security of Israel and the country's intolerance for the great powers' partition of its land, were absolutely key to her leadership. According to Steinberg (2008), Golda's cognitive style included an aggressive personality pattern that is characterized by intolerance, possible prejudice and strong, closed-minded opinions regards values and beliefs. Once she gained a point of view, she was likely to be strongly committed to it, as it was perhaps best emphasized throughout her life, even in childhood (Shenker, 1978; Steinberg, 2008).

On the other hand, situational leaders thrive in constantly changing environments, in which, it becomes important to adapt styles and approach in order to cope better than a transactional or task-oriented leadership style can achieve. The core competency of this leadership approach is the capacity to constantly identify other people's performance, competence and commitment, to ensure a measure of flexibility, which in turn draws their cooperation. Despite her poor health and other personal difficulties, Meir returned to active politics and still thrive. While was largely considered an unlikely replacement for Eshkol (relatively less qualified), she took advantage of the rivalry between Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon to solidify the coalition and her position. While she was thought to be a stop gap candidate, she seized the opportunity to lead the Labor Party to a resounding victory. In an analysis of Golda's leadership style, Steinberg (2008) considered her to

have been particularly pragmatic, ideologically-oriented, goal-oriented, tireless, authoritarian and highly involved. The high involvement included collegial or solicitous, formal or polite, and to a lesser extent domineering engagement with others. Others included competitive, cooperative, openness to the media, and active relationship with the public. She demonstrated, but did not score too strongly with regard to the use of power to achieve goals, arbitration, process-orientation, consensus building, and personal validation. Ultimately, however, her career ended with a resignation after the Yom Kippur War, in part because of her failure to plan and prepare for the War effectively. Her greatest contribution to leadership, I think, is the importance of conviction, determination, pragmatism, and capitalization on opportunities (however they present).

Golda Meir was a trailblazer in every manner. Only the fourth Israel Prime Minister, she thrived in an environment of little stability and molds. Her uncharacteristically, “un-leadership-like” rendered her into a fearless enterprising person, who played an instrumental role in shaping the modern day state of Israel. Her firm conviction, courage, determination, tirelessness, and daredevil attitude ensure that she rose to the top of Israel politics. She was not a perfect or the most qualified leader and it does not even appear that she tried to, but she remained easy for many to identify with and trust. Whenever she could be trusted, she seized the opportunity and made the best out of it, as evidenced in the statehood negotiations and the aftermath of Eshkol's death. She was, as Kissinger describes her, “tremendously human, very stubborn, very sentimental, very passionate, very courageous she had all these qualities”.

References

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