

Crossing Divides and Building Bridges: The Intergroup Leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the Integration of India

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This paper explores the intergroup leadership of freedom fighter and India's first Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as he facilitated the political integration of nearly 600 diverse princely states in the wake of independence. While leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are well known in discussions of leadership, the intergroup leadership of Patel remains an untold yet highly compelling lesson in how a leader can span boundaries and build bridges amidst disparate and divided groups to forge a path forward.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in the twenty-first century requires not only a specialized set of skills, but a new mindset. Fundamental shifts in geopolitics, demographics, technology, and globalization, among other changes, call for fresh ways of seeing and understanding the world around us. Tichy & Bennis (2007) used a sporting metaphor to compare traditional ways of leading with the new thinking and practices these challenges necessitate:

In a way, the difference between life in the old-style organizations and in the new is the difference between golfing and surfing. These days, you need to be able to ride the breaking wave of constant change. There is no stopping to change your equipment. (p. 71)

Daft (2011) identified six paradigm shifts, indeed survival skills, today's leaders need to avoid a 'wipeout' in an era of unrelenting disruption and chaos. These shifts include moving from an expectation of stability to managing change and crises, from control to empowerment, from self-centered to a higher ethical purpose, from hero to humble, from competition to collaboration, and from uniformity to diversity. The latter two changes in particular emphasize the role of the leader as a relationship builder who who possesses the courage necessary to span boundaries and cross divides. A central task of leadership is bringing people together around a collective goal in this era of the bridge builder (Eng, 2009).

The intergroup leadership of freedom fighter and India's first home minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel offers a fascinating study for several reasons. First, Patel crossed boundaries and built bridges that spanned cultural, religious, ideological, and political divides, thus making his leadership instructive for contemporary leaders facing similar challenges. A second factor is that his leadership remains a largely undiscovered story, particularly in the West. While Indian leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal

Nehru are well known in discussions of leadership, Patel's leadership, though equally compelling, invites further exploration in the literature. Thirdly, the momentous historical, social, and political circumstances in which he operated, highlights the complexity of intergroup leadership as well as its potential rewards.

When the British quit India in 1947, they left unresolved the status of nearly 600 princely states that now had an undefined relationship with the new nation. Despite being loosely held together by a formal administrative system during colonial rule, the political status of these states was left in limbo. Owing to the sheer diversity of the subcontinent, these princely states varied widely in terms of region, religion, ethnicity, and language, each possessing its unique cultural, social, and psychological identity. They were not declared to be a part of India nor Pakistan, and neither were they designated as independent entities. This undefined status complicated the political and social situation in the subcontinent, particularly in the bloody aftermath of Partition. Sardar Patel was given the daunting task of integrating these states into the Indian union and it was a challenge that he would meet in strategic and bloodless fashion through the principles of intergroup leadership.

In this paper I will explore Patel's leadership in the integration of India as a model of intergroup leadership and adaptive work (Heifetz, 2002). According to Heifetz, when leaders face challenges where standard operating procedures and current knowledge are inadequate, an adaptive response is necessary. Intergroup leadership, as a form of adaptive work, requires a change in a group's values, attitudes, and habits of behavior. We begin with an overview of intergroup leadership as an adaptive response and then examine three current models of intergroup leadership identified in the literature. We then turn to an exploration of Patel's leadership in relationship to these models.

INTERGROUP LEADERSHIP: AN OVERVIEW

Intergroup leadership is leadership that brings different groups together in the service of a broader vision, mission, or goal (Pittinsky, 2009; Ernst & Yip, 2009). According to Forster (2009), "The study of intergroup leadership addresses the key question of how leaders mobilize and direct positive intergroup relationships despite internal or external ideological, cultural, or political divides" (p. 93). By its very nature, intergroup leadership envisages the future, as compared with a management approach, which tends to focus on maintaining the status quo (Pittinsky, 2010). Intergroup leaders seek to discover ways to span boundaries and dismantle silos rather than operating "within their box on the organizational chart, within the interests of their unit or team, and within the mind-sets of the demographic or cultural groups to which they belong" (Yip, Wong, & Ernst, 2008, p. 13).

The inclination to maintain internal group solidarity, sometimes based in "us versus them" thinking, often occurs in the presence of external threats and challenges. History is replete with examples of leaders who have intentionally exploited, indeed even created, intergroup differences as a means of leading (Pittinsky, 2009). Whether it be in Iraq, Yugoslavia, or Silicon Valley, divisiveness, scapegoating, and demonizing the 'other' has been perceived as an easier, more reliable method of arousing emotional response and rallying the troops. Leaders who employ a 'divide and rule' type strategy often recognize that "a common enemy, whether real or invented, can help them establish their credibility, define their constituencies, and motivate their followers" (2009, p. xiii). While such an approach might help foment intragroup cohesiveness, trust, and greater belief in the worthiness of the goal, it can concurrently sow the seeds for intergroup conflict, a phenomenon identified as the *in-group/out-group tradeoff* (Pittinsky, 2005). In this process, as group solidarity deepens, so too may stereotypes, groupthink, and a hardening toward the 'other.'

Fortunately, leaders have the opportunity to employ an alternative strategy to address the intergroup challenges they will inevitably face. Leaders can choose to bring disparate parties together, helping build bridges that foster strength and common purpose, thus sparking a collaborative and creative response toward common goals. It has been asserted that this divergent and more difficult path is the need of the day (Eng, 2009; Yip, Wong, & Ernst 2008). Pittinsky (2005) offered this perspective, "Because the actions of the former group of leaders are so harmful and the success of the latter group is so important, the study of the intersection of leadership and intergroup attitudes is crucial to a science of leadership

studies (p. 2). There is a growing recognition that effective leadership requires extending beyond the borders of the traditional leader-follower exchange to multiple groups. Traditional lines are being redrawn, some even eroded, as leaders seek to reach out to and collaborate with external groups and stakeholders across national, cultural, ethnic, and religious divides (Daft 2011; Hogg, van Kippenberg, & Rast, 2012, p. 232). Yip, Wong, and Ernst (2008) highlighted the synergy that develops when leaders catalyze subgroups and outgroups to achieve benefits far greater than they could realize by themselves.

INTERGROUP LEADERSHIP AS AN ADAPTIVE RESPONSE

The nature of intergroup leadership remains largely unaddressed in the leadership literature (Hogg, van Kippenberg, & Rast, 2012). Heifetz (2009) asserted that intergroup leadership is an adaptive response to the complexity of managing challenging relationships and identities across group boundaries. According to Heifetz, an adaptive response is required when organizations and communities face problems that cannot be bridged with prevailing knowledge or standard operating procedures because the solution lies outside of existing paradigms. By its very nature, an adaptive challenge extends beyond any technical fixes available through routine management approaches, making a leadership response necessary. Heifetz described adaptive work as that which involves “orchestrating conflict and discovery across group boundaries, regulating the disequilibrium those differences generate, and holding the parties through a sustained period of stress” (2009, p. 131). Adaptive work goes deep, challenging core values and existing mindsets, thus requiring “experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments...without learning new ways – changing attitudes, values, and behaviors – people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment” (Heifetz, 2002, p. 13). Heifetz argued that “we need to explore intergroup leadership...because we face important challenges for which our current repertoire of strategies for managing relationships across group boundaries still does not suffice” (2009, p. 128).

Hogg, van Kippenberg, & Rast (2012), outlined three characteristics by which to evaluate intergroup leadership. First, intergroup leadership involves collaboration among formal groups or an organization toward a shared outcome. Secondly, it results in specific behavioral outcomes produced by the collaborative efforts of the parties involved. A third characteristic of this form of leadership is that the process transforms subgroup self-interest into cooperative intergroup performance. The intergroup leader seeks to bridge deep divides by building a sense of connection, shared values, and goals.

According to Hogg, van Kippenberg, & Rast, the notion of social identity is central to understanding the nature of intergroup leadership as the groups we belong to significantly influence cognitive self-appraisal in relationship to group membership. In an intergroup leadership approach subgroup members are encouraged to maintain a dual identity, that of their own subgroup alongside a superordinate identity that neither ignores or threatens the former (Hogg, 2009; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007). Pittinsky (2009) asserted, “Intergroup leadership honors that tension; it is concerned with bringing subgroups together without trying to eliminate their differences -- or even wanting to do so” (p. xvii). In light of this notion, intergroup leadership is measured by how well it “revolves around leaders’ ability to engender a sense of *intergroup relational identity* (i.e., self-definition in terms of one’s group membership that incorporates the group’s relationship with another group as part of the group’s identity)” (Hogg, van Kippenberg, & Rast, 2012, p. 233). How then does one effectively implement intergroup and adaptive principles to lead across group and organizational boundaries? We now examine three models that have been proposed in the literature and then Patel’s intergroup leadership in light of these models.

MODELS OF INTERGROUP LEADERSHIP

Pittinsky & Simon (2007) offered a model that includes five pathways for promoting positive intergroup relations. The first pathway involves encouraging contact between subgroups. This initial step of exposure among subgroups provides an opportunity to develop positive relationships, decrease prejudice, and mitigate stereotyping. Furthermore, because the leader is endorsing the action, such contact is often perceived as positive by subgroup members. (2007). The second step is managing

resources and interdependencies. Subgroups often compete for limited resources. When groups are willing to acknowledge the existence of a shared goal (or a shared threat) they tend to be more open to acknowledging the advantages of collaboration. The next two steps address social identity. Pittinsky and Simon suggested that leaders promote supordinate and dual identities concurrently, emphasizing the “we” aspect, while valuing subgroup identities. Honoring this tension involves a recognition that unity does not necessitate uniformity while recognizing benefits of social diversity such as greater creativity and innovation. Finally, Pittinsky and Simon recommend that leaders promote positive intergroup attitudes through increased cooperative interaction and increased perception of positive value or benefit from the other group.

Heifetz (2009) proposed a two-phase model of intergroup leadership based on his framework of adaptive leadership. In phase one, leaders form a “group of groups,” that is, a working group consisting of subgroup members who are willing to stretch beyond their in-group loyalties and work across boundaries to seek an adaptive solution (p. 135). In this first step, the leader stimulates a conversation around which persons and what issues to include. A balance is struck between exclusion and inclusion as the leader seeks to involve the right people while ensuring the presence of diverse perspectives. Heifetz described the significant commitment this requires, “New loyalties emerge among representatives working across boundaries, a process that often takes many months of confidential meetings...New loyalties anchor a new collective identity” (p. 135).

Heifetz’s (2009) second phase, the more difficult of the two, strikes a similar vein to Pittinsky & Simon’s (2007) notion of dual identity promotion. In this phase, members of the new working group return to their respective subgroups to advocate for and share the vision of the adaptive work. Heifetz noted that Phase II is where the majority of adaptive intergroup processes fail because “each ‘representative’ member must lead her own constituents in incorporating and refining the results of the group process, or else the deal unravels” (p. 135). In the process, representatives may face the charge of having ‘sold out’ to the other groups and then pressured to return to the status quo.

To ensure viability of this model, Heifetz recommends that representatives seek ongoing advice from the working group as they develop a coordinated plan to improve communication and the subgroup’s tolerance for change. Throughout this process of consultation, working group members must remain flexible and open to making adjustments, thus increasing the likelihood of subgroup members accepting and acting on the adaptive work. In the midst of this process, the intergroup leader continues to forge strong relationships among his/her fellow representatives which serves to “hold these factional representatives together despite the accusations that will pull them apart (p. 136). It is important to note that in both phases, the intergroup leader orchestrates the adaptive work yet places it back in the hands of the parties facing the challenge, a key aspect of adaptive leadership theory (Heifetz, 2002).

A third model, proposed by Kanter (2009), consists of six propositions by which leaders make productive use of differences to build bridges. Because this model encompasses several elements described in the other models, it will serve as a touchstone for discussing Patel’s leadership. The first of the six propositions, *Convening Power*, involves bringing different subgroups together to initiate structured conversations around the issue and find common ground. According to Kanter, this step builds energy through the clash of ideas. In the second proposition, *Transcendent Values*, intergroup leaders identify core values that serve as a framework from which to work together. Identifying a shared goal or a collective definition of success, for example, can serve as a motivating force.

The third proposition, *Future Orientation*, involves building a new, forward-looking identity while honoring personal history. According to Kanter (2009), “Effective intergroup leaders stress the future and, in so doing, create the basis for a new overarching identity that produces collaboration” (p. 79). In the fourth proposition, *Important Interdependent Tasks*, the intergroup leader identifies challenging tasks that present an opportunity for shared participation which serves to strengthen relationships. In Proposition five, *Interpersonal Norms and Emotional Integration*, the leader engages in conversations around codes of conduct and group norms. Ground rules around mutual respect, avoidance of blame-oriented language, and a proactive stance toward problems are established, all of which serve to fortify emotional bonds. Finally, in proposition six, *Inclusiveness and Evenhandedness*, intergroup leaders stress and demonstrate

inclusiveness among all parties, often through a significant investment in material resources that benefit everyone. This final proposition involves a degree of risk as leaders often face criticism from their own subgroup for these boundary-spanning gestures, yet the leader is encouraged, through these overt acts of generosity, to persevere in sending the message that everyone is valued.

Taken together, these models of intergroup leadership share much in common. All three emphasize the importance of bringing parties together physically as a means of bringing them together psychologically and socially. Each model emphasizes shared values, shared goals, and a future-orientation, while acknowledging and honoring individual history. In each model, the intergroup leader orchestrates the process, yet places the work squarely in the hands of the people. Each model also encourages leaders to conduct the process in an atmosphere of respect, moving beyond tolerance, to the active promotion of positive attitudes among the subgroups (Pittinsky, 2009). Finally, each requires that intergroup leaders be willing to take personal risks and tolerate unpredictability in order to realize the fruits of their work. With these models in mind, we turn to an exploration of the intergroup leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as he crossed divides and spanned boundaries to integrate a nation.

SARDAR PATEL AND THE QUESTION OF THE STATES

Sardar Patel formed one-third of the triumvirate that helped modern-day India realize both national independence and integration. The historical contributions of Mohandas Gandhi (the *'father of the nation'*) and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (India's first Prime Minister) in the Indian independence struggle are well known and have been recounted in numerous forms. The contributions of Patel, who played a leading role in the last and perhaps most critical phase of the birth of the nation, appear less familiar and even less explored. Patel's influence, however, is of such significance that his monikers, such as the *"Iron Man"* and *"Bismarck"* of India, acknowledge his pivotal intergroup leadership on the world stage. Nehru described him as the *"Builder and Consolidator of New India"* (Krishna, 2007). The *Manchester Guardian* observed that without Patel, "Gandhi's ideas would have less practical influence, and Nehru's idealism less scope. Patel was not only the organizer of the fight for freedom, but also the architect of the new state when the fight was over" (as cited in Krishna, 2007, p. 2).

While an extensive exploration of Patel's life is beyond the scope of this article, a brief sketch of for the sake of context may be helpful. Born as the fourth son of an impoverished farmer in the small Gujarati village of Nadiad, Patel's early years appear marked by a love for education and a willingness to challenge the status quo, a characteristic attributed to the influence of his father (Krishna, 2007). Biographers describe him as a bold and outspoken student who frequently stood up for his classmates, even staging a walkout in the sixth grade when he observed a teacher misbehaving (2007; Saggi, n.d.). Patel desired to follow in his brother's footsteps and become a lawyer, an expensive and difficult proposition considering his family's lack of finances. There was, however, a policy in those days that allowed private candidates to sit for the public exam. Patel managed to save enough money to travel to England, and through disciplined self-study, borrowing books, and observing lawyers in local courts, managed to pass the bar. The two brothers took on a variety of cases and Patel soon developed a reputation as a successful lawyer. Patel soon became involved in local politics, helping resolve several community disputes in noteworthy fashion. A turning point in his life occurred when he attended a rally to hear fellow Gujarati attorney, and by that time well-known national activist, Mohandas Gandhi. Patel was so inspired by Gandhi's message that he joined the Indian National Congress and the growing movement for independence.

Patel would soon play a key role in the first of what would become many of Gandhi's *satyagrahas* (nonviolent resistance campaigns) including the historic Salt March to Dandi in 1930 (Saggi, n.d.). Krishna (2007) noted that Patel became the "backbone" of Gandhi's agitations, describing him as Gandhi's "John the Baptist" (p. 45). Patel helped the Congress party negotiate with the British, as well as the Muslim League, winning several victories along the way and impressing Gandhi with his political rhetorical, administrative, and organizational skills. Patel would, over the course of the freedom struggle, spend months in jail for his political activities. With Gandhi's support, Patel was soon elected Congress

President in 1931 and Chairman of the Parliamentary Board in 1939. He was given the honorary title “Sardar,” by Gandhi, meaning “leader” or “chief.” He went on to hold other key roles, including being the Indian representative on the Partition Council and becoming the first country’s Home Minister. He also founded the Indian Administrative Services, a civil service entity that would help unify the diverse nation. The experience of working with and through the people around him helped set the stage for Patel’s role in helping integrate the nation in the wake of independence.

When India gained independence on August 15, 1947, the country was anything but a unified entity. The Indian union consisted of a variety of colonial territories and nearly 600 Princely States ruled by independent sovereigns loosely held together by the British political and administrative system. As part of their exit strategy, the British offered a plan wherein these princely states would become independent units free to negotiate their status. They proposed, in essence, the creation of a ‘Third Dominion,’ leaving these states with the choice of remaining independent, joining India, or the newly created Pakistan. This plan was ultimately rejected by the Congress party, leaving these states with an undefined status.

Amidst the complexities of Partition, the Congress party realized that the British proposal threatened the stability of the entire subcontinent and would lead to Balkanisation (Krishna, 2007; Menon, 1955). As proposed, the plan would leave issues of inter-state water rights, tariffs, trade, railways, and telegraphs unaddressed. Each entity could potentially be required to seek permission for the movement of goods and water through its territory. Furthermore, if war were to break out, the allegiance of these independent kingdoms was in question. In India’s view there was a potential for “these 600 states [to be] 600 sores in the body of India” (Shivaramu, n.d., para. 2).

As the new government struggled to formulate a response to this plan they turned to Patel for leadership. His fair, flexible, and efficient work on the Partition Council had won him the respect of all parties involved, including his fellow countrymen, the British government, and the Muslim League. In light of this confidence, and because of his key role in the peaceful transfer of power, Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, appointed him the first Home Minister of the country, a move that met with the full endorsement of Gandhi and Nehru (Krishna, 2007; Menon, 1955). Furthermore, the British made a significant concession to Patel upon their exit, agreeing to leave “the question of the Indian states” in his hands as the Home Minister, and avowing that they would not interfere with the process (2007, p. 87). This critical agreement provided Patel the opportunity to negotiate with the rulers on a state-by-state basis.

The difficulty of Patel’s undertaking cannot be overstated, especially when one considers the diversity of the Indian subcontinent. Some territories such as Kathiawar contained 222 states, while others were less than two square miles. One kingdom contained 206 people while the state of Hyderabad was 80,000 square miles with a population of 17 million people (Krishna, 2007). Furthermore, each of the Princely States contained its own people-group, often varying widely in language, religion, and culture. Menon (1955) noted, “The Union was not homogeneous, nor could it be justified on any consideration — linguistic, ethnical or geographical” (p. 110). Pondering this intricate patchwork, Tharoor (1997) mused, “How can one approach this land of snow peaks and tropical jungles, with seventeen major languages and twenty-two thousand distinct dialects, inhabited in the last decade of the twentieth century by near 940 million individuals of every ethnic extraction known to humanity?” (p. 7). Tharoor noted that Churchill had a similar realization when he quipped, “India is merely a geographical expression. It is no more a single country than the Equator” (p. 7).

The political situation added yet another layer of difficulty. The Congress Party refused to recognize the princely states as sovereign entities and insisted that they must choose between India or Pakistan, barring any third alternative. Furthermore, Nehru was clear that if India decided to exercise a military option, the likelihood of a successful resistance campaign was slim. Nehru warned that any kingdom that chose not to join the Union could potentially be regarded as an enemy state. Finally, there was little in the way of unity among the princes themselves. Some of the smaller states felt a keen distrust toward the larger states, others were split between constituencies that favored joining India, while the ruler, for example, favored Pakistan; some of the princes harbored their own national and international political ambitions (Krishna, 2007). Recalling the discussion of intergroup leadership described earlier in this

paper, and particularly Kanter's (200) six propositions, we turn now to an exploration of how Patel navigated this complex situation through his intergroup leadership.

THE INTERGROUP LEADERSHIP OF SARDAR PATEL

The first step Patel took in this arduous task was to meet with the princes as a group, something which he did soon after his inauguration as Home Minister. The decision for a group meeting is similar to Kanter's first proposition of intergroup leadership, *Convening Power*, which involves bringing subgroups together, as well as the initial steps described by Pittinsky & Simon (2007) and Heifetz (2002; 2009). As a prelude to their meeting he made an appeal to the princes where he communicated his vision for the nation, hoping at the same time to allay their fears regarding the future and their place in it (Krishna, 2007; Menon, 1955),

Our mutual conflicts and internecine quarrels and jealousies have, in the past, been the cause of our downfall...We cannot afford to fall into those errors or traps again...The safety and preservation of the States, as well as India, demand unity and mutual cooperation between its different parts. (2007, p. 91)

Patel followed up his address with a personal meeting with the princes in December 1947. He encountered resistance from several of the princes at this meeting, yet Patel was both diplomatic and direct. He made it clear that the path forward involved compromise by all parties, thus acknowledging the loss that Heifetz (2002) described as a critical part of adaptive work. He also assured the group of his personal investment in the process, "I have come...not as a representative of the old Paramountcy or of any foreign power, but as a member of a family trying to solve a family problem" (Krishna, 2007, p. 95). This first meeting with the working group was one of many over the course of several months as Patel organized informal social gatherings among the various rulers as a venue for them to engage in dialogue about the future. It was in these meetings where loyalties were refashioned, boundaries spanned, and divides crossed in search of a solution. The working group would also gather for lunch meetings at Patel's home in Delhi. At these gatherings Patel appealed to the shared values of patriotism, responsibility, and the enduring duty of princely rulers to care for their people. Though at times he encountered fierce resistance, delay tactics, and political brinkmanship, he continued to meet with the rulers at various times and places throughout the country. He was consistent in maintaining a call for unity and reconciliation. Eventually he was rewarded with many of the rulers agreeing to join the country through this forum of open dialogue.

Kanter's second proposition, *An Appeal to Transcendent Values*, was another element of Patel's leadership strategy. In a 1947 address, he spoke to the working group, recalling the noble history of the princes and the patriotism of their ancestors as they served the motherland. Early in the process he told the group,

This country with its institutions is the proud heritage of the people who inhabit it. It is an accident that some live in the States and some in British India, but all alike partake of its culture and character. We are all knit together by bonds of blood and feeling no less than of self interest. (Menon, 1955, p. 69)

Other core values he appealed to included the duty of rulers to care for their people, the responsibility of self-rule, and the legacy the princes would leave for future generations through their "unity, strength, and security" (Krishna, 2007, p. 97). On the whole, this values-based appeal would influence and shape the willingness of the majority of the rulers to join India.

Kanter's third proposition, *A Future Orientation*, was another significant element of Patel's intergroup leadership. In his meetings with the rulers, Patel frequently reminded them of the groundbreaking nature of their work. He encouraged them to take note of the winds of democracy that were now

blowing across the subcontinent. This future-oriented approach was not without its risks, however, as the idea of democracy threatened the very foundations of monarchy. Yet Patel reminded the working group of a newfound strength their people had found in their participation in the Indian freedom struggle. Patel articulated a picture of the future when he bluntly stated in one of his meetings with the working group,

I have met some Rulers today, and I have told them that they cannot carry on in the manner they did in the past. They must transfer their power to the people...They must move with the times. Let them cease to be like frogs in the well. These are the days of democracy, and the Rulers too must trust in their people. (Krishna, 2007, p. 95)

Kanter's fourth element of intergroup leadership, *Important Interdependent Tasks*, was also clearly present in Patel's movement toward national integration. A central task of adaptive leadership is turning the work over to the people (Heifetz, 2002). Patel backed up his appeals to the working group by providing them opportunities to exercise their experience and influence as leaders in the service of the nation. This was a particularly strategic decision as many of the princes felt uncertain about their role in the future of the nation. Patel helped allay these doubts by providing the rulers an opportunity to work for the greater good. After a brief standoff with the Maharaja of Jodhpur, for example, Patel won the vote of the ruler and subsequently offered him a position as an ambassador for the message of integration. The Maharaja travelled across the country conveying Patel's message with a sense of enthusiasm and purpose (Krishna, 2007). Patel's efforts in this regard were also seen after the resistance and then accession of the Nizam of Hyderabad to whom he wrote, "It is the duty of human beings to contribute their share to this process by sincere repentance and by employing the period that is left in discharging their duties to their people and to their God" (2007, p. 146).

Kanter's fifth proposition, *Interpersonal and Emotional Integration*, is also evident in Patel's leadership. According to Heifetz (2009), adaptive work entails losses that take a variety of forms, "...from direct losses of goods such as wealth, status, authority, influence, security and health, to indirect losses such as competence and loyal affiliation...People do not resist change per se; they resist loss" (p. 131). Patel recognized and acknowledged the loss the princes faced by acceding to India in several ways. Patel allowed the rulers to continue living in their palaces, enjoying many aspects of their previous lifestyle, thus choosing not to take a heavy hand in this matter. Patel gave a directive to his aides, "Do not question the extent of the personal wealth claimed by them, and never ever confront the ladies of the household. I want their States, not their wealth" (Krishna, 2007, p. 149). Patel's commitment to this fifth proposition is also evident in his dealing with the few rulers that resisted his call to join the nation. In spite of fierce opposition from the Maharaja of Travancore, he wrote a personal letter to the ruler who was feeling increasingly isolated, "It is in my nature to be a friend of the friendless. You have become one by choice, I shall be glad if you will come and have lunch with me tomorrow at 1 p.m." (2007, p. 99). By acknowledging the losses, building interpersonal relationships, and recognizing the emotional undercurrents involved in his radical call to change, Patel helped facilitate the emotional integration of the rulers.

Kanter's sixth and final proposition, *Inclusiveness and Evenhandedness*, is evident in Patel's magnanimous dealings with the princes, including those who immediately rejected any possibility of joining India. While Patel was able to win a majority of the states over in a relatively short amount of time, there were at least three states that maintained an active resistance. The southern Kingdom of Travancore was the first to resist, and as noted in the discussion of the fifth proposition, Patel appealed to the ruler by sending him a personal letter inviting him to a meeting to discuss the issue. The Maharaja initially rebuffed the offer and declared that he was preparing to open up diplomatic relations with other countries. In spite of this threat, Patel refused to give up and eventually convinced the prince to join the Union after what turned out to be several blunt discussions. Patel acknowledged his leadership and encouraged him to use his skills in service of the nation.

In the case of the Muslim ruler of Junagadh, a 96% Hindu majority state whose people were overwhelmingly in favor of joining India, it was discovered that the ruler was in secret negotiations to

join Pakistan. After several failed attempts at diplomacy, Patel decided on a show of force. He sent the Indian army to the state's border, spurring the Nawab to flee to Karachi. Ultimately, India and Pakistan agreed to a referendum to decide the issue and the majority of the people voted to join India. Patel was lauded for his firm yet evenhanded approach to this problem as he avoided communal strife and achieved "a unique victory over Junagadh without causing loss of life and property...preserving the integrity and unity" of the state (Krishna, 2007, p. 128).

A third instance of Patel's inclusiveness and evenhandedness can be seen in the way he willingly reconciled with the ruler of Hyderabad despite his machinations against the central government. In this case, the Nizam was secretly backing rebels, sending millions of rupees to Pakistan, and covertly harassing the Hindu population. After months of negotiation, Patel sent the Indian Army to the state to reestablish law and order. Within five days, the Nizam surrendered, order was restored, and Hyderabad became a part of India "with scarcely a shot being fired" (Tharoor, 2007, p. 179). In response to the surrender, Patel made a visit to Hyderabad in February 1949 and personally reconciled with the Nizam, offering him an opportunity to help build the nation, "Your great personality is a valuable asset for India at this critical period when the whole world is in turmoil" (Krishna, 2007, p. 146).

CONCLUSION

Through the exercise of the six principles of intergroup leadership, Patel proved to be a leader who crossed political, cultural, ideological, and religious divides. He brought diverse and divided parties to the table, appealed to shared values, oriented them toward the future, turned the work over to the people by providing meaningful interdependent tasks, acknowledged the importance of interpersonal and emotional integration, and maintained an inclusive and evenhanded approach. Patel's leadership reveals a compelling example of leadership based on soft power, persuasion, dialogue, and adaptive work as central methods (Heifetz, 2009; Nye, 2004). He maintained a posture of listening, foresight, and vision to forge a nation which Nehru described as "a bundle of contradictions, held together by strong but invisible threads" (1946, p. 563). Patel discovered those threads and, amazingly, achieved the unification of the nation within a period of 18 months. It is important to note, that amidst his success, Patel sometimes faced criticism from his own party; there were occasions when he would clash with both Gandhi and Nehru as the three struggled to carve a path forward. Yet ultimately he avoided what could have been another violent and bloody chapter in the formation of the young nation through a combination of "firmness and generosity" (Tharoor, 2007, p. 179).

Kruschev acknowledged Patel's leadership role when he remarked, "You Indians are an amazing people! How on earth did you manage to liquidate the Princely rule without liquidating the Princes?" (2007, p. 149). Lord Mountbatten described Patel's work as "by far the most important achievement of the present Government...had you failed, the results would have been disastrous" (2007, p.149). Rotberg's (2009) description of intergroup leadership as a choice between an old and a new way of leading harmonizes well with Patel's practice of its principles providing both a model and a challenge for today's leaders:

...the next generation...need not be schooled in the old ways. They can learn how to bring groups together and how to gain the benefits of such intergroup success. They can learn how advantageous it is to uplift rather than prey upon their peoples. They can learn how to unite them. (p. 168)

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