Unit 2 - Case Study

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The case under analysis is the 2008 film “Defiance” that delivered incredible lessons on motivation and leadership as well as ethical dilemmas (Zwick, 2012). This movie is based on a true event that took place in 1941 when Nazis wanted to eliminate the Jews from the land. Defiance movie tells the story of the leadership of two brothers whose parents were killed by Germans and after taking revenge they took charge and saved the lives of almost 1200 Jews from killing in hands of Germans (Duffy, 2004). In the film, many motivational theories are reflected in a different context and made the people follow the two Jewish brothers that will be discussed in great detail below. Furthermore, many other dimensions will also be explained in detail.

After taking revenge for their parents by killing the police chief both Tuvia and Zus Bielski along with their other brothers set out to help other Jewish people in the provision of safety and security (Khairi, 2010). Tuvia, however, feels guilty of his action and soon realizes that revenge is not what he wants. He develops a great passion for saving the other Jewish people who are left helpless and needs help. He immediately decides to dedicate the rest of his in protecting and leading those refugees. Soon, this large group of Jews also joins the brother in their wooded hideaway. As far as ethics is concerned, both the brothers are all for saving the lives of others but there comes a certain point when Zus becomes exhausted from this mission and argues with Tuvia. He tries to make Tuvia realize that this is not what they intended to do for the rest of their lives and they should stop serving other people needs and should place their ones on top. But when he sees that Tuvia has developed a fondness in this mission, he leaves and joins Sovereign Partisans group to take his own revenge from Nazis. This situation is one of the ethical dilemmas both brothers faced in the movie in which Tuvia decides to go for what is ethically required from him but Zus opts for persuasion of his own interests. After when Zus go away, Tuvia becomes even more determined to provide the refugees with everything he can under his ethical leadership. He strictly believes that if the helpless Jews want to survive, they should also learn to tolerate. He teaches them that no matter what happens, we should never retaliate because we are not animals. This side shows another aspect of Tuvia's ethical concepts. Tuvia is very kind and empathetic who is moved by his own act of killing and does not want to promote the idea of taking lives. The group had no food and it was difficult for them to survive this way but even in this crucial situation, Tuvia guides them ethically by not taking food from those farms who cannot afford to give as they are not thieves or murderers. He also forbids them from indulging in any sexual act as the pregnancy will make matters worse both for the females and the babies. There are not enough ethical dilemmas faced by Zus unlike Tuvia but when Sovereign Partisans betrays the Tuvia’s group by standing back, Zus rejoins the group again for support along with his own followers. This element clearly shows that no matter how much different Zus was from Tuvia in serving humanity, one thing united the brothers i.e. ethical beliefs.

Both the brothers had different ways of leadership that sometimes also contradicted especially in the start when Zus opposes Tuvia and leaves the group because he wants to serve himself. Tuvia as compared to Zus was very selfless, kind, caring and responsible as a leader as well as he was a great advocate of ethics (Ekarianto, 2011). He was a transformational leader as he inspired with his charisma. He was the eldest of the brothers that is why he opted for the leadership himself but he didn’t mind when Asael took control for a short time while defending the group.

Zus, on the other hand, was a more authoritative type of leader who also considered self-interest while taking certain decisions. He was as brave and courageous as a leader as Tuvia was. Unlike Tuvia, his own life was more important to them than saving humanity. He believed in taking revenge from the oppressors and this is why joined Sovereign partisans. But his immediate come back to save his brothers and the group surprised everyone interpreting that he also has an affiliation like Tuvia. This move was a great act of heroism from his side.

Tuvia's selfless stance and jumping to save others first made him exceptional in leadership as the group started to giving him the complete power and authority because they knew he will decide the best for them. Whereas Zus's violent tendencies, sharp and quick mind made him eligible to be a good leader as well because he knew how to respond back to the enemies. The brothers' fight was one of the behaviors that challenged their ability to lead others because both of them were unable to take a clear stance. When Zus left, dealing with conflicting situations made it hard for Tuvia to take a decision like a good leader e.g. in the scene of an armless German soldier, he was left stunned as whether to stop people from killing him or to allow him. It was quite a difficult situation for him as one hand it was ethically wrong to kill him and on the other way, it was not right either to do the otherwise because of the frustration people had. Another issue Tuvia faces is when a rape victim of a German soldier gives birth to a baby and Tuvia prepare his mind to ask them to leave but has to alter his decision again. Zus's selfish attitude challenged his ability to lead the group because unlike Tuvia he was very ambitious. However, his stance in the beginning and his immediate comeback, in the end, makes his nature more complicated as a leader.

The motivational theories which were identified in the movie were, Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which the topmost needs that motivated the group to follow to two brothers are physiological needs that include food, water, shelter, and safety. These were the basic needs they were deprived of from the German Nazis. Tuvia offered them shelter and security to which they agreed. On another hand, what motivated the Zus to leave the group was the self-determination theory. He was determined to take revenge from Nazis on his own.

Looking at the movie critically, there was extraordinary leadership portrayed by Tuvia as it is never easy to place the needs of other people on top of yours. He possessed an authoritarian leadership which made him influential. As far as Zus's leadership is considered if I were have never left the group to serve my own interests especially when I had the chance to serve humanity.

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