

From Leadership among Nations to Leadership among Peoples

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Let us define **leadership** as the ability to motivate others – to accomplish a common goal, to overcome difficulties, to obtain support for decisions taken by a leader. As far as leadership among nations is concerned a country could be considered leader if one succeeds to motivate others to follow him in order to accomplish a certain policy. A leader can be a leading nation or a leading personality. There also could be leadership by motivation or by force.

I would like to discuss three topics:

A traditional understanding of leadership among nations,
How leadership among states has become leadership among people,
Who could be the leaders of the future.

A **traditional understanding of leadership** among nations encompasses, first of all, agencies of traditional legitimacy. For thousands of years, foreign policy was equated with power politics. The legitimacy of foreign policy throughout centuries was understood as the exercise of leadership to increase power of the state, and the glory of the monarch. As foreign policy was power politics, leadership among nations reflected this concept of international relations in this way of thinking: European history was a history of leaders who succeeded in wars and victories, who knew how to lead in war and peace.

The characteristics of traditional leadership have been:

- Leadership is based on power, mostly military power
- A country is supposed to be strong in order to survive
- A leader is allowed to use force to strengthen its leadership position
- Population is not consulted if they accept leaders or not
- The essence of leadership corresponds to the essence of foreign policy as far as the goal and the means of foreign policy are concerned.

The **traditional goals** of foreign policy deal with strengthening of sovereignty and power of the state. Foreign relations were seen as a struggle for existence. “Great” were those leaders who knew how to use military power who knew how to conquer who succeeded to increase the size and power of their territory. These were the qualities demonstrated by the great leaders in history from Alexander the Great to Peter the Great, from Charles the Great to Catherine the Great. Traditional leadership pursued traditional goals.

Traditional means of foreign policy have been *realpolitik*, *raison d’etat*, and war. War was normally considered a continuation of foreign policy by other means.

Therefore, a leader was allowed to do whatever he considered useful for the state. He could conquer, kill, and destroy. The objectives of international leadership had primarily states in consideration, not the citizens.

The soldier and the diplomat of traditional states formed a unity in order to support this kind of leadership. During the last three hundred years, this unity was demonstrated in war and peace, on the battlefield and during peace conferences. Since the Westphalian peace agreements of 1648, seven global wars were waged over the question who would lead the international community, and these wars had either the character of dynastic wars, wars among nations or wars over ideologies.

The Spanish war of succession, 1701-1714; was between Austria and France over the question who would rule Spain. The British exploited this confusion in the Continent, supported balance of power in Europe, and managed to establish predominance on the sea. After the great Nordic war, 1700-1721, Russia replaced Sweden as the leading power - Peter the Great of Russia managed to defeat the forces of Charles XII the Great of Sweden and open his country's access to Europe. At the same time, France lost its influence in northeastern Europe. The seven years war, 1756-1763, helped Prussia to become the leading European nation. Great Britain obtained the sole leadership in North America and a dominant position there by defeating France in the war over Quebec and Eastern Canada.

After the Napoleonic Wars in the opening decades of the 19th century, the Holy Alliance of big European powers, who constituted the core of the Concert of Europe, succeeded to lead Europe and the most of the rest of the world for 100 years. After World War I, 1914-1918, the League of Nations was created to test a new concept of leadership in international relations based on collective security. This new model had some limited success, but it ultimately failed by its inability to avert another world war. After World War II, 1939-1945, two leading powers emerged the USA and the USSR. With the institutions of the new **United Nations** and international organizations the victorious powers and their allies tried to establish a new world order. The resulting struggle for leadership between these superpowers triggered a global Cold War, and a strategic arms race unprecedented in history.

There are a couple of common characteristics for all these wars: there were all decided on the battlefield, and dominant sea powers, Great Britain and the United States were always among the beneficiaries.

New attitudes in International Relations

The Cold War was not only characterized by a fierce ideological struggle and an arms race, but also by a fierce competition to persuade the people of the world to **choose the way of life** favored by the superpowers. In those days, I travelled a lot throughout the communist Eastern European countries, and I could easily discern one thing: people in those countries were fascinated by various visible things western: the blue jeans, popular music, literature and a way of life. This attraction to

the western lifestyle created a clear impression where the true sympathies of eastern Europeans were.

Traditional leadership was based on power, and power was mostly equated with military power. Traditional goals of international leadership were to win wars and succeed in peace. The traditional players in international politics were monarchs supported by their generals and ministers. This set-up continued to after World War II, but people also started thinking about taking into account not only power of the states, but also the well being of the population of states, especially the ones in distress. Franklin Delano Roosevelt saw the dawn of the new kind of leadership coming, when he talked about the post World War II period. He emphasized that leadership of the great power was to be based not only upon size, strength and resources, but also upon those enduring qualities of moral leadership that could arise the whole level of international relations the world over. This new concept of leadership was quite different from what Machiavelli emphasized almost 500 years prior in his book *The Prince*.

In terms of goals, means and players, **international relations changed** dramatically, and so did **leadership** concerning international affairs, and leaders had to take into account these developments. State leaders had to adapt by orienting their practice toward new goals and toward the necessities and priorities of those they wanted to lead, the people. To be sure, many aspects of traditional leadership that has roots in power politics are still required, as there are traditional inter-state conflicts in the world from the Near East to the Far East, from Central Africa to Central Asia, and there are rogue states, failed states, and emerging powers. There are also new threats from globalization of terror to the threat of cyber war. However, even traditional leadership cannot anymore be exclusively oriented to inter-state relations. New leaders have to take into account public opinion, and new approaches are required as content and goals and means and players in international relations have changed dramatically. Leadership practices have changed as well.

The Diplomatic Revolution in Europe

Since the end of World War II, a diplomatic revolution has taken place in Europe, concerning the legitimacy, the goals, and the means of interstate relations within Europe: the logic of war has been replaced by the logic of values – this is a very fundamental development. Among the European states belonging to the European Union foreign policy is no longer oriented toward power of the states, but toward the well-being of the people.

These changes that have taken place in Europe, and this is my theory, have also permeated other parts of the world. New foreign policy goals have been developed: according to these new goals, foreign relations, and international politics have to

deal with the increase of the living standards of the people, fighting unemployment while implementing human rights and the same could be said concerning the promotion of trade and cultural exchanges. Also, health and education have become goals the international community is working for - all these differ quite dramatically from traditional foreign policy goals and traditional activities for statesmen.

In parallel to the new goals, there are **new means** developed to implement their practical aspects. Hundreds of international organizations from the UN and their affiliates to countless regional organizations exist for this purpose - UNESCO is responsible for culture and education, UNICEF for the wellbeing for the people, UNDP for economic development, there are organizations for refugees, healthcare, or preservation of the species; Council of Europe for human right, the Asian Bank of Development, and so forth. Further, countless international conferences, whose aim is to promote the wellbeing of people in various countries or world regions take place every year.

What have been the results of all these institutionalized efforts and conferences? There, indeed, maybe very little in terms of concrete material results, but all over the world, when people hear and watch the reports of these conferences taking place, read stories about organizational activities by the UN and other agencies, they develop a sense of entitlement. There is an impression created that the international community owes something to the world population in need. People get convinced that international organizations must take action to improve their ways of life.

This is not a question whether hard power or soft power is more important in international relations. My point is this: the goals of foreign policy are not anymore exclusively about obtaining more power for the state, but instead, the improving the wellbeing of people, both domestically and internationally, has become the most preeminent goal in foreign policy. New state leaders have to take this change into account.

In former times, there were major world powers, and the others did not amount to much. Today there are many power and influence rankings that also take into account the activities of smaller nations, there are myriads of statistical data and indices demonstrating what governments have achieved for their peoples: there is, for instance a Human Development Index concerning living standards, education and life expectancy; there are data rankings concerning pollution; natural environment, economic development, sanitation, gender equality, wildlife protection, nutrition, foreign aid, ethnic minorities, sexual orientation, etc. There are many human rights reports, there is Transparency International and Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, and so forth.

There are many thousands of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in all those fields now covered by the international community especially concerning human rights, environment, and development. All this clearly demonstrates one thing: there is a new dimension of activities in international relations, and the new foreign policy leadership has to be aware of that. Leadership among nations has been dominated by the question of war and peace for centuries. This is still a decisive challenge, but at the same time, international relations these days are more about serving the people, improving their living standards, helping them to lead a decent and dignified life.

In this sense, the question of leadership among nations has become a question of leadership among peoples of the world. Future leaders will be measured based on what they have accomplished in that regard. Democratic revolutions have taken place in many parts of the world. In more countries around the world, democracy has enabled people to elect their leaders and to hold them accountable. Now, even autocrats have to take into account the will of the people.

Special Developments

There are special developments leaders must be concerned about:

- Democratic revolutions and the information revolution
- Globalization
- Difficulties concerning the use force

Democratic revolutions, revolutions in the field of **education** and **information** have changed the essence of power. This does not mean that the whole world has become democratic or everyone is connected to information highways. But people all over the world nowadays know more about their rights - they have developed more demands and they have become more critical toward authorities, more defiant to oppression and exploitation.

Whereas in former times, the great majority of the world population was illiterate; today more and more young people graduate from schools and colleges. These young people have access to new technologies to new social media platforms, they could form new networks in order to exercise new form of power. Democracy, which was originally and primarily developed within the nation states, has now been extended to international affairs. Decision-making in international relations has to take into account the will of the people, their desires and aspirations.

Globalization as well affects leadership in a dramatic way. Globalization has unleashed forces that are often very difficult to control. For instance, financial markets seem to be more powerful than political institutions. Globalization of radical ideas has become easier through new social media platforms. Political institutions and state leaders continue to act primarily within the nation-states, but worldwide challenges like the recent global financial crises or global environmental problems

must be met at the international level. There is a clear conundrum here: the nation state cannot solve global problems, and the world state does not exist, and that represents a very special challenge for all international leaders.

Further, it has become more **difficult to win wars** and to use force to secure international leadership. To wage a war means to enforce one's will upon someone else by military means. This, as a policy choice, has become much more difficult than it was in former times. It is very difficult if not impossible to destroy and to kill and to use force in front of TV cameras. Casualties are no longer accepted by people the way they used to. And the whole traditional concept of honor, which used to be common since ancient times has changed and no longer could carry the day in many countries. Besides, there are many difficult international problems that cannot any longer be decided on the battlefield: the financial crises or questions concerning economic development or dire poverty. It used to be that a military victory would guarantee a political solution for an international problem. Today, a military victory that is not accepted by majority of people, becomes instead the originator for further violence, chaos, and turmoil. Leaders have to be aware of that.

At the same time we have seen much resources and energy wasted in state-building, nation-building or peace-buildings, but these huge expenses do not produce quick results. Every time human psychology is involved, a change of attitudes can hardly be achieved in a short period, neither by pressure nor by incentives.

So **leadership** within international community **has become more complex**. Traditionally, managing war and peace used to be the main task for leaders throughout centuries. There are now many new and very different challenges. Leaders have to be aware of the importance of well being of the people, and care about human rights. They have to know how to protect the environment and how to handle financial crises, and how to deal with the people who have become defiant.

Who Will Be the New Leaders?

The new leaders will be those who succeed to combine **traditional leadership** concerning war and peace with the new kind of leadership concerning the **well-being of peoples**. Leadership today is, to a very large extend, build on the power of attraction. Top universities attract students from the world over; flourishing economies attract foreign investments; and peaceful societies can serve as a model for others.

Among the countries this is, first of all, the United States – as far as traditional leadership is concerned the US will certainly stay the strongest country for the foreseeable future. As far as the new kind of leadership is concerned, the US has the best chances to lead the world. Why? The new issues in international relations concerning the well-being of the people, in my opinion, is nothing else, but a

worldwide expansion of the American dream. The American dream now has a world-wide dimension. Who should be more capable of leading in this regard than the US?

The notion of “American exceptionalism” could pose certain problems: if you apply to your behavior different norms and regulations from what you apply to the others, a problem of acceptance for such norms and regulations may well arise.

But also other countries and regions, who do not rely on traditional power, can serve as leaders: For example the European Union or Northern countries. In Europe we have achieved peace and high standards of living for the last two generations.

The Scandinavian countries have achieved a high quality of life and lead the world in many ways, from life expectancy to high environmental standards; and from human rights to achievements in education. This is certainly attractive for millions of people from different parts of the world (Even if there is leadership crisis within the European Union, it stays a model for the outside world. Fundamentally, the EU is characterized by a “divided sovereignty” syndrome meaning that in terms of essential questions, like monetary policy, we have given up national sovereignty, but at the same time, have failed at creating anything resembling European sovereignty).

Emerging powers, like China, Brazil or India will very likely increase in regional influence in years to come, but I think their way of life is not that attractive the world over as to make people in other parts of the world consider it as a model to follow. They might increase regional attractiveness but hardly serve as a global model.

As far as international organizations are concerned, new players like the global mass media or the NGOs, will certainly continue to play a leadership role in certain fields. But they will not take over global governments, and they will never become substitutes to sovereign leaders.

All in all, I dare to say, we live in interesting times: the concept of power politics has been dramatically modified, and new qualitative dimensions in international relations concerning the welfare of the world population has emerged. The future leaders have to understand the nature of new international priorities.

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