A Broader Perspective for Global Leadership: Economic, Political and Anthropological

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper will be to begin the process of constructing a coherent argument for a model of global leadership that broadens the focus of traditional organizational leadership to include global- economic, political and anthropological perspectives.

Keywords: Leadership, Global Leadership, Global Dynamics, Global Business, Leadership Perspectives

Theoretical Background and Gap Addressed

Paradigms (Kuhn, 1961) of the American-centric version of organizational leadership research migrated over time across traits, behaviors, situations, and a series of others more recent; but the subject matter is closer to management than to leadership, if as part of your definition of leadership you include attention to values, vision, a systems perspective, and political influences; and if as part of your definition of management you assume it is okay to treat these as irrelevant externalities, more suitable for study in other disciplines. The research around this version of organizational leadership has been something of a tempest in a teapot, giventhat such a narrow version of leadership leaves out input from scholars from disciplines whose ideas should be considered relevant, but have not been. For example, the Path-goal theory of leadership (House and Mitchell, 1974) assumes leaders choose to be either participative, supportive, directive, achievement-oriented, depending on personality characteristics of followers, demand characteristics of the job, as well as satisfaction and performance levels; as if external factors such as power and resulting politics, micro- and macro-economic realities and cultural values within which the leader-follower dyad interact; play no role at all.

Northouse (2007) summarized the paradigms of organizational leadership research and in the next-to-last (13) chapter of his book he mentioned the relationship between leadership and culture and in the final chapter he discussed leadership and ethics, with a brief allusion to those advocating for a "humane" perspective among leaders; but these are budding areas of interest and as such, only highlight how long the field has ignored them.

In a book designed to prognosticate the future of leadership and management in the 21st century, William Starbuck wrote of four future conflicts between: the affluent and the poor, companies and nations, managers and stakeholders, and the short run and long run. As can be seen from the conflicts he cites, Starbuck has in mind a more global version of organizational leadership than prevailed throughout the 20th century.

In the same volume, Chris Argyris, speaking to the academic side of the house, brought out his usual argument for productive versus defensive reasoning; and although he stopped short of doing so, we believe his reasoning can be applied to the study of organizational leadership; in that, those who operate as the definers and defenders of organizational leadership thought, have tended to protect it as much as possible from the systems perspective that has so thoroughly washed over management and organizational studies.

Argyris says organizations are prone to cover up their lack of productive thinking with defensive thinking and, we believe, such is the case with the history of organizational leadership research and theorizing. With an attempt to globalize leadership research, we may be moving toward a broader view of leadership and moving toward productive and less defensive reasoning.

With the relatively recent expansion of leadership thought into the global arena, we still largely see an absence of a systems perspective, and a field slow to open up to more economic, anthropological and political perspectives. But how long can this denial of the connection across disciplines be permitted? It is not as if leadership issues can forget how broad they are while being studied so narrowly.

Mendenhall raises this issue in his treatment of the scope of global leadership, citing a "lack of multidisciplinary thinking or linking, as leadership studies have been conducted in various disciplines with only scarce mutual benefit or bridging." [Mendenhall, et.al. 2008]

Not dealing with governmental and economic power and national politics while discussing leadership is akin to ignoring issues of climate when talking about the weather. "Science" may be rendered easier if "externalities" are vanquished from the discussion, but what sort of externally-valid insights can be gained from such a hermetically-sealed field of study?

If managers are concerned mainly with planning, organizing, directing and controlling and leaders something broader having to do with influencing values and inspiring a shared vision, then it makes sense the domestic leader would need to operate with domestic values and vision, whereas the global leader would need to ascertain and adapt to global values and vision.

"Global leaders are individuals who effect significant positive change in organizations by building communities through the development of trust and the arrangement of organizational structures and processes in a context involving multiple cross-boundary stakeholders, multiple sources of external cross-boundary authority, and multiple cultures under conditions of temporal, geographical and cultural complexity," (Mendenhall, et.al. 2008, p. 17).

The political environment within which leadership occurs is dynamic, for example, in the Middle East; many governments have been deposed by restless citizens; including the ongoing struggle in Libya. Organizational leaders operate in these unstable environments and this turmoil can surely not be irrelevant to the nature of that leadership. What type of government will result from political takeovers? It could range from a total democracy to a dictator that will be worse than the one they have thrown out. The results of conflicts in other Middle East countries are also unpredictable. Political, business and not-for-profit leadership continues in the midst of all this uncertainty and can never been sealed off from it.

Government leaders in Western Europe are also being challenged by their citizens. Financial crises in these countries may lead to changes in government. Leaders of NGOs or private companies will make few decisions not directly affected by these economic, political and cultural realities, but if you read the leadership literature, you might not suspect that to be the case. The United States government goes through changes every two to four years that greatly impact business or NGO leadership. We've seen a Republican president with Democrat houses. Then, we elected a total Democrat government and now a Democrat president and Senate, and a Republican House of Representatives. A different outcome of the Presidential election in 2012, could have to a totally different makeup of the United States political scene, that is, if Romney had been elected and not Obama. Local politics in the United States will also change as elections are held every two to four years. The current economic upheaval around the globe is surely a different climate in which to be a leader than the one that existed, for example, in the 1990s.

While business organizations perform under the assumption that profit maximization is critical to their survival, they must become aware of the changes in natural resources that may help or hinder this goal. For example, new technology may help to drill for more oil, but are we sure that this drilling will be safe. As we use up some natural resources such as timber from forests, it will take many years to replace this timber. While each country wants its citizens to have a higher standard of living, managers much recognize the changes from global competition that will affect their own decision. For example, China emerging as a major consumer of oil will change the supply and price of oil for many countries. Leadership never operates outside the influence of this reality?

For-profit business leaders have to recognize that while their employees want higher wages and benefits, they must compete in a global economy where many workers are under paid and must work in substandard conditions. Change in these countries comes at a slow pace and leadership in more developed countries must be prepared to plan for this type of competition.

Humanity's behavior is also changing and affecting both the political and economic environments. While workers in developed nations have had a high standard of living for many years, workers in developing nations are now able to see and want the benefits of luxuries that other nations have. Leaders will have to deal with the reality that as their workers seek to maintain their wages and standard of living, there are also workers in other countries who are changing their standard of living and demanding an even higher one, so that whereas a more autocratic or even despotic form of leadership might have worked in developing countries before, such may no longer be the case.

Concern for the natural environment is widespread today. During the Industrial Revolution, less efficient usages of natural resources was of little concern to the general public. That attitude is different today and leadership will necessarily take into account such concern for the natural environment.

In the past leaders could become amoral and not be concerned with the ethics of running a business, but today's organizations are under much more public scrutiny than in bygone eras; prior to Enron, World Com, and other ethical disasters, leaders have to be not only financially scrupulous but morally so as well. The banking industry and housing bust are good examples of where greed has created great problems and demonstrate just one more constraint on the nature of modern leadership.

The Essence of the Proposed Model

This paper is intended to explain our belief that global leadership should encompass not only global economics, national and international politics, but also what we refer to as an anthropological perspective. To assert that a global leader should understand and operate from global values and vision is quite a claim, since values and vision often depend on where in the world you are located. In short, there may be no clear global consensus on values and vision for the future of our planet. However, some invariance's do exist across corporations and governments; and furthermore, just as corporations and governments share certain values and vision, so too do most of the citizens of the globe, what we refer to as anthropological (human) values and vision.

Business or corporate values begin with the requirement to maximize profit. Furthermore, when the business or corporate community looks out across humanity they see producers and consumers, not merely as sentient beings with interests beyond the marketplace. The business community sees the earth's supply of natural resources as standing in reserve (Heidegger, 1962), there for the taking and effectively a natural supply of materials for their processes, rather than a globe of precious minerals, air, water, and vistas. "Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing, namely standing in reserve (*Heidegger, 1962*)." In short, when those in the business community look out on the world, they only see it through an economic lens and every other perspective is blurred. "The corporation's legally defined mandate is to pursue relentlessly and without exception its own economic self-interest, regardless of the harmful consequences it might cause to others." (Bakan, 2004).

Governments share values and vision as well, to the extent that they see their people as clients or in the case of democracies, voters. They define natural resources as domestic or foreign, meaning they see whatever minerals, water, air, or other categories of resources as belonging to their nation and those in other lands as not belonging to them. Governments primarily focus on maintaining power over their people and their nation's influence in the community of nations.

On the other hand, anthropological or human values and vision cast people as sentient beings, natural resources as a means of supporting these and other sentient beings, that is other species; and the primary focus of these values is well-being or happiness.

Although corporate and governmental leaders are constrained to take the perspective of their roles, the most informed and ultimately successful among them will acknowledge and seek to include in their values the perspective that says all life forms should be supported in their endeavor to thrive.

Anything other than this more magnanimous stance, is almost certain to lead to parasitical and even pathological behavior on the part of the leader, and country or government, with which they have been charged.

The current U.S. President Barack Obama said: "I always believe that ultimately, if people are paying attention, then we get good government and good leadership. And when we get lazy, as a democracy and civically start taking shortcuts, then it results in bad government and politics."Corporate leaders, it could be argued, often have more power than heads of state or heads of even international agencies such as the IMF or World Bank; both within their borders and around the globe. In the United States, the recent Citizens United decision of the supreme court gave corporations unlimited opportunity to contribute to political campaigns to advance their interests, a right that not even individual citizens have. So to say that corporate or business leaders are not also "political leaders" would be disingenuous at best and naïve at worst.

Most national political systems have major barriers to entry so power is concentrated in the hands of a few and political leadership outside of the formal structure is limited to grassroots movements, NGOs or informal arrangements, ranging from open and scrupulous to quite the contrary. Well mobilized grassroots movements, NGOs or lobbying campaigns can affect tremendous change and the fact that corporate leadership is heavily involved, directly or indirectly; secretively or openly; in such campaigns should be acknowledged and accounted for in the academic literature.

While business leaders are active in national and international politics despite historical obstacles such as laws and constitutions, informational asymmetry, and other related factors, their role is considered indirect or ancillary. On occasion, however; as was the case with the BP oil spill in the U.S. gulf in 2010, corporate leadership comes directly under the control or influence of political leadership. The global political leader must be able to think and legislate not only in national terms, but also global; and just as importantly, so too must the global business leader. The realist's zero-sum-game logic must be subordinated to the idealist's views of cooperation and integration in both political and corporate global leadership.

While including political action and the research surrounding it in our models of business leadership is necessary it is not enough since a more apt model of global business leadership must also include global economics and ultimately, an anthropological perspective on international business affairs.

Moving on to the economic lens in relation to global leadership, it is important to remember Franklin D. Roosevelt's words, "True individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made." Trade and product development has become significantly more globalized in the recent decades, such that no country can be isolationist for fear of economic or political loss. Most corporations have factories located around the globe for cheaper access to resources, and many components of products are internationally created and assembled. This globalization phenomenon is inevitable (although its form is negotiable) and the belief that drives it is that economic advantages can be realized and the standard of life across the world can be improved.

While major institutions such as the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank all advocate the complete removal of trade barriers, especially in the developing world, more attention must be placed on the reduction of protectionist measures in the developed world (Chang, 2008). A major example of this is in agricultural subsidies. As the United States has long pursued a policy of strong agricultural subsidies, these same policies have had a devastating effect on the development of agriculture in the third world. As so many international institutions have argued vigorously for trade liberalization, it is clear that more must be done to liberalize the policies of the largest and most influential economies so that those in the developing world may more easily and fairly experience the conditions by which to expand local agricultural capacity, and thus, self-sufficiency.

Just as the Neolithic Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions forever changed the destiny of humanity, so too has the modern version of globalization; redefining both human potential, international cooperation, and the further integrating the planet. While globalization has led predominately to gains for much of the world, there have been some serious losses and growing pains. What must be avoided is that the gains experienced by the workers of the developing world, which are only a fraction of the wages previously paid to their first world counter-parts, stagnating or even declining as profit margins are expanded.

While the old model of organized labor is clearly facing serious challenges today, it is obvious that there is certainly still a demand for labor representation and "fair" conditions. The struggle between the emerging world and developed world's labor and the drive for higher profits will necessitate clear leadership with a global, rather than national, perspective in mind.

While the corporate model of leadership is important, this broader business model, to include politics and economics must also be developed; but it would be a mistake to stop there. The business leadership model needs to be broadened to cover all three perspectives: the political, the economic and the anthropological.

For example, as fuel costs increase and the developing world gains increasing demand for the same resources as the developed world, there will undoubtedly be demand-pull inflation. This means already stretched personal income will bring even less buying power. In order to maximize buying power, utility, and to minimize waste, local solutions like farmers markets and other similar programs and innovative local leadership will be the key to driving the positive change. The development of localized systems across the globe, though local in scope, can be often repeated and thus have a global effect.

Anthropologist Michael Schiffer said: "Anthropology is the only discipline that can access evidence about the entire human experience on this planet." These words echo as the focus turns to the last of the component of the central model, the anthropological. As Dr. Schiffer's words suggest, anthropology, or the study of humanity itself, is the only science broad enough to fully encapsulate the scope of the material not directly covered by the political or economic perspectives

While political analysis can well explore the very human drive for power and the economics can evaluate the human impulse for wealth and both describe major means of social organization, it is anthropology that stands as the science with the means to fill in the gaps and add a more human emphasis rather than merely political power or economic wealth.

Anthropology is especially important in the discussion of global leadership since increasingly previously different cultures and societies are required to confront their differences. The study of business leadership cannot escape important questions such as gender discrepancy, racial discrimination, and religious intolerance; among other manifestations of inequity; and cannot leave those fields to those studying political or economic leadership. An anthropological perspective encompasses norms and institutions and shaping political and economic realities.

While political analysis aims toward power accumulation and maintenance and tends to focus on national action, the anthropological considers the quality of lives being lived in societies and around the globe. The economic perspective focuses on wealth acquisition and retention especially in the "person "of the corporation. While political action and economic development might eventually end social improvement and justice, anthropology begins with these aims.

For a comprehensive global leadership model, the fundamental human drive for power and the derivative drive for money, must both be curtailed and balanced with equity and justice.

As the government power has decline in the past few decades relative to corporate power in the world, the economic perspective has come dominate public debate as well as business leadership research. The profit motive is one of the greatest forces in the world today. Just as governments have no pre-defined lifespan, neither do corporations. Alone, the test of individual benefits outweighing individual loss is problematic when it is made part of a global model. Under an individual or institutional framework for global leadership, actions leading to public loss, such as is the case with air or water pollution, are not only justifiable but encouraged. This is why a more comprehensive view of global leadership is necessary. It is vital to fully understanding economic factors, examine political conditions and incorporate the broader anthropological goal of quality of life.

The anthropological serves as not merely another perspective, but the first among them as it is the guiding and central component. While the anthropological is vital, it is still crucial to recognize it as part of a larger model. Though the anthropological point of view is important, alone, it would ignore the pragmatic realities of humanity and the political and economic means by which humanity improves. Justice, power and economic security are all important drivers of human behavior.

All these perspectives should play a role in any global leadership model. The truly successful leader should strive to formulate and implement business strategies taking all three factors into account.

Policy inconsistency, or disharmony, leads to wasted resources and social loss. This is not merely in the form of inefficient resources use or reduced profits, but also in the way of reduced happiness and social satisfaction.

In the end, this paper will discuss global leadership and offer a unique and emerging holistic mechanism to evaluate the emerging field, the political-economic-anthropological model. The three perspectives of the model will be discussed, how they are currently imperfectly connected, and how the central task of global leadership will be to seek harmony among these perspectives.

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