



INTER ACTION COUNCIL

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Enlightened Leadership and Human Responsibility

**Co-Chaired by Helmut Schmidt
and Abdul Salam Majali**

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Leadership is largely the art of mobilizing or inspiring people to achieve certain goals, whether at local, national, or international levels. Enlightened leadership contains some aspects that can be universal; other aspects frequently depend on cultural and institutional context; and some exist in tension with other desirable characteristics.

Core Aspects of Responsible and Enlightened Leadership

1. A key element of leadership is the determination to change society in a way that will benefit society as a whole; this element, however, is balanced by a need, in democratic society, to respond appropriately to the expressed will of the people. Similarly, accountability and transparency of decision-making should be central to a responsible leader's mission.
2. Leadership is not necessarily about the actions of people in positions of political power; a meaningful discussion of leadership must encompass the participation of those in society who hold positions of advocacy and who draw their influence primarily from moral persuasion.
3. Leadership must be judged in its political, social, historical, legal, and cultural context. Leaders are products of a particular society at a particular time, and face a 'changing moral yardstick' against which they must measure their achievements as their societies evolve.
4. The best leaders are those who achieve beneficial results in their own societies. Leaders may also be judged, however, on the means they use to reach those ends and the impact of those ends on others outside the leader's constituency. Leaders will often lack the self-reflection necessary to determine *a priori* which goals are sufficiently 'good' to merit the questionable means used to attain them.
5. While the elements of a responsible decision may be opaque, some elements of responsible decision-making may be made more concrete. Choices leaders make may be judged according to the disinterestedness of their motives; their understanding of a situation's complexities; their consideration of 'unintended' but

foreseeable consequences of action; and the sources of advice to which the leader looks for support.

6. An enlightened leader is one who employs an ethical standard pertinent to the community which they represent. Simplistic 'moral' action, however, lacking a profound understanding of the context of a situation, and often encouraged by the need for visible activity in the face of crisis, is not a substitute for well-informed and dispassionately considered decision-making.

Leaders and Their Constituencies

7. Leaders are judged at several levels – their standards of personal behavior; the results they achieve for their primary followers; and their interaction with society and the world beyond their immediate constituency.
8. Leaders who fail to respond adequately to the needs of their primary supporters – either through lack of ability or because they focus too heavily on concerns arising outside their constituency – will frequently lose the support they need to exercise authority. Those who narrow their appeal to an inward-looking core and refuse to consider the interests of other groups, however, lose the moral stature needed to function in a diverse and rapidly integrating world.
9. Integrity honesty and trust are necessary aspects of a responsible leader's interaction with their constituency. This fundamental principle, however, must at times be weighed against the need for diplomacy and step-by-step persuasion to help a society through difficult times of change. Leaders must remain committed to listening and learning throughout their careers.
10. Leadership is not always defined by directives issued from authority and acted upon by subordinates. Constituents who view themselves as active participants in the process of change, and who are encouraged in that view by their leaders, contribute more to their societies than constituents who see themselves primarily as consumers of services provided by an autonomous, impersonal system. Being a citizen is different from being a customer.

Leadership Challenges in a Changing Environment

11. The increasingly rapid and thorough distribution of information in modern societies creates new possibilities and questions for emerging leaders. Manipulation of constituents has become more difficult as the ideal of a free and robust mass media has spread throughout the world. The power of the media to inform and educate constituents, and the ability of leaders to focus the media's influence for beneficial purposes, have become crucial aspects of leadership.
12. The world's problems are increasingly global, but leadership remains national. It should be realized that leadership on the international scene is inherently constrained by leaders' responsibilities to their national constituencies. Internationally, the dynamics of national politics will require that centralized authority is de-emphasized in favor of partnership and cooperation between autonomous entities, such as nation-states.
13. Reactions to globalization that take the form of nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and isolationism will increasingly require leaders with a global perspective. It will be increasingly important for leaders to respond to this challenge to discover shared – rather than conflicting – interests of divergent constituent groups.
14. Leadership at the global level is possible through persuasion, requiring leaders to demonstrate to their constituents that global problems have significant national impacts. The lack of powerful, international institutional structures has contributed to a vacuum of leadership at the global level, and the foundations for global governance need be strengthened to foster global responsibility.
15. In the global context, consciously educating future leaders is increasingly important. This task requires exposure of promising individuals to the culture of foreign countries; to the culture of organizations of different types from their own; and to senior leaders who have the ability to lend advice based on seasoned experience. An element of this education should be programs which foster global links between the world's leaders in all fields.

16. Political leadership at all levels, from local to global, is being challenged by individuals working through civil society organizations. Support for non-governmental responses to social problems is in part a result of increasing cynicism over the effectiveness of leaders within the formal political system. The role of civil society within decision-making processes will grow, requiring the development of enlightened and responsible leaders at all levels of society.
17. Economic prosperity can create conditions in which both rights and responsibilities can flourish. The rules of the market, however, do not provide a sufficient ethical framework for social decisions, and enlightened leaders within the private sector should play a key role in the development of ethical business practices which take into account both economic and broader social values.
18. In a world divided between secular and spiritual spheres, it is important that sufficient attention be paid to meaningful interactions between the two, and that secular and religious leaders be well-educated in each other's sphere of activity and responsibility within the framework of their common concern for humanity.
19. One way to enhance leaders' commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is to advocate that national leaders be sworn to not only their relevant constitutions and/or confessional codes, but also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which has been approved by their countries. This may prove to be valuable to the fulfillment of the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities, which is strongly advocated by the InterAction Council.

Participants

InterAction Council Members

1. H.E. Chancellor **Helmut Schmidt** (Honorary Chairman)
2. H.E. Prime Minister **Abdul Salam Majali**
3. H.E. President **José Sarney**

High-level Experts:

4. Mr. Yasushi **Akashi**, former U.N. Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

5. Ambassador Adrian **Basora**, Eisenhower Exchange Fellowships
6. Dr. Joanne B. **Ciulla**, Professor, Coston Family Chair of Leadership and Ethics, Jepson School of Leadership Studies, University of Richmond and UNESCO Chair in Leadership Studies, United Nations International Leadership Academy, Jordan
7. Lord Bernard **Donoghue** of Ashton, Visiting Professor in Government, London School of Economics
8. Dr. David **Gergen**, Co-Director, Center for Public Leadership, Harvard University
9. Mr. Kennedy **Graham**, Director, The United Nations University International Leadership Academy
10. Prof. Ronald **Heifetz**, Co-Director, Center for Public Leadership, Harvard University
11. Dr. Richard **Jolly**, Special Advisor to the Administrator and Architect of the Human Development Report, UNDP
12. Dr. Barbara **Kellerman**, Director, Center for the Advanced Study of Leadership, The James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership
13. Mr. William P. **Laughlin**, U.S. entrepreneur
14. Prof. Harold J. **Leavitt**, professor emeritus, Stanford Graduate School of Business
15. Mr. Michael A. **Ledeem**, former national security adviser to the U.S. President, and Resident Scholar in the Freedom Chair, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research
16. Prof. Jean **Lipman-Blumen**, former Special Advisor to the Domestic Policy Staff in the White House, and Thornton F. Bradshaw Professor of Public Policy, Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management, Claremont Graduate University
17. Dr. Joseph **Nye Jr.**, Don K. Price Professor of Public Policy and Dean, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
18. Prof. Amin **Saikal**, Director, Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, Australian National University
19. Prof. Anne-Marie **Slaughter**, Founding J. Sinclair Armstrong Professor of International, Foreign and Comparative Law, Harvard Law School
20. Prof. **Tu Wei-ming**, Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy and of Confucian Studies, Harvard University and Director, Harvard-Yenching Institute
21. Ms. Flora **Lewis**, International Herald Tribune

Observers:

1. Ms. Laura **Liswood**, Secretary General, Council of Women World Leaders
2. Motoyoshi **Noro**, Special Advisor on Partnerships/Japan Affairs, UNDP



INTERACTION COUNCIL

Tokyo Secretariat

Address: 3-16-13-609 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0032, Japan

Tel: 81-3-5549-2950 Fax: 81-3-5549-2955

e-mail: interact@estate.ocn.ne.jp

website: <http://www.interactioncouncil.org>