

Summary Report of the Meridian Global Leadership Summit: *Who Leads the World? Rethinking Leadership Around the Globe*

Overview

On Friday, October 18, 2013, Meridian International Center hosted the second annual Global Leadership Summit in partnership with Gallup and the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. The event, which brought together policy makers, subject matter experts, diplomats, business leaders and members of the media, was a high-level forum to discuss the current—and future--state of global leadership.

The Summit featured the release of “Global States of Mind: New Metrics for World Leaders,” presented by **Jim Clifton**, Chairman and CEO of Gallup. The report captured key findings from over 160 countries on what citizens think of their leadership and set the stage for ensuing discussion through two dynamic sessions. The poll, the only global study of its kind, measures the views of citizens on key quality of life issues, including law and order, food and shelter, institutions and infrastructure, good jobs, and well-being. The report demonstrates that factors beyond classical economic measures affect people’s attitudes and behaviors, and it provides leaders with better tools to examine the future of economics, government performance, and the overall momentum of their citizens.

In two panel discussions to follow, speakers from diverse backgrounds and sectors used the findings of this report as a foundation in discussing the demands for global leadership today and to reflect upon opportunities for accelerating cooperation through culture, commerce and education.

Reimagining Power: The Demands for Global Leadership Today

Moderator: Ambassador Stuart Holliday, President and CEO of Meridian International Center
Speakers:

H.E. Eduardo Medina-Mora, Ambassador of Mexico to the U.S.

H.E. Ashok Mirpuri, Ambassador of the Republic of Singapore to the U.S.

Dr. Vail Nasr, Dean, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

H.E. Tebelelo Seretse, Ambassador of the Republic of Botswana to the U.S.

Dr. Tomicah Tillemann, Senior Advisor for Civil Society and Emerging Democracies, U.S. Department of State

Discussion highlights

America’s positioning as a superpower in the world, the emerging role of civil society, and the relevance of the United Nations as a governing entity were central to the discussion. Panelists focused on the perception of U.S. global leadership in the world and weighed in on the demands of leadership in a rapidly changing world. There was a general consensus that the U.S. still performs the role of a superpower, largely because there is no alternative to the U.S. at this point in time. The United States’ position as a superpower is unsurpassed by any traditional metrics, including the size of country, strength of military, vitality and pace of innovation, excellence in education and research and development, ability to maintain rule of law, and the balance of geography, resources and demographics.

The rise of China is a factor, but the Chinese do not have the ability and capacity to perform the roles that the U.S. does. For example, the U.S. has guaranteed the security and economic growth of Asia-Pacific for the past 50 years and still remains the most prominent power in the region, in spite of the rise of India and China as important regional powers. In many areas of the world, such as the Middle East, where there are no multilateral and international institutions to preserve peace, the U.S. has played an indispensable role. Although there have been debates about U.S. engagement in the world, there seems to be no substitute for the role that the country has played in many parts of the world. Panelists concurred that in spite of nation building challenges that the U.S. faces, the country will continue to play the role of a superpower if the problems at home are addressed and focus is kept on the global arena.

In sharing their thoughts on what the U.S. needs to do to maintain its superpower status, the panelist noted that the country needs to 1) engage in smart partnerships, connecting U.S. innovation, energy, and entrepreneurship with the dynamism of various countries around the world; 2) acknowledge the increasingly important role of civil society and embrace the dynamics of the new relationships that are being renegotiated between the citizens and governments.

In response to the question whether the United Nations is still relevant, panelists were in agreement that there is a need for global governance. As much as reform and review of the institution is necessary, its importance as an inclusive platform for global dialogue cannot be ignored. The U.N. is especially important to a large number of nation states, who are not part of the Security Council, but need global rules and norms for their political and economic security. It serves as a body where multilateral solutions to world problems are achieved through global consensus. Panelists agreed that despite some flaws in the political domain, e.g. maintaining international peace and security, the UN's role in sustaining the economic and social development and addressing many global issues has been exceptionally strong. The UN does much out of the limelight but that is enormously important, such as peacekeeping missions, responding to crises situations (e.g. Syria, DRC), delivery of aid and assistance. The UN's collective efforts have been critical to addressing global challenges such as hunger, climate change, and HIV/AIDS, among many others.

There was discussion on whether the Security Council structure is an obstacle to create action on key issues. Panelists were in agreement that although the veto prevented numerous resolutions from being implemented and has served the interests of various permanent members over time, it is still relevant and serves as a check and balance mechanism so that no one country can make a decision for the entire global community. The key question is whether there should be more countries with veto power represented in the Security Council, and how the Security Council structure can be reformed.

Panelists noted that while the UN still remains relevant, there are many other multilateral institutions that are now playing important governance roles on the financial as well as the humanitarian side such as G20, East Asia Summit (EAS), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), G7 and G8, including some that are created by non-western countries such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Accelerating Cooperation through Culture, Commerce and Education

Moderator: Christopher Schroeder, Entrepreneur and the Author of *Startup Rising: The Entrepreneurial Revolution Remaking the Middle East*.

Speakers:

Mohamed Shafik Gabr, Chairman and Managing Director, ARTOC Group for Investment and Development

Dr. Shaygan Kheradpir, Chief Operations and Technology Officer, Barclays

Tom Monahan, Chairman and CEO, CEB

The Lord Palumbo of Walbrook, Chairman of the Jury, Pritzker Architecture Prize

Discussion highlights

The discussion centered on how the spread of technology and the rise of entrepreneurship are changing the world from the bottom up. Around the world, people with unprecedented access to technology (mobile phones, tablets, super-computers) are connecting, creating, innovating and solving problems once solely the domain of big, top-down governments, businesses and institutions. A new generation of wired entrepreneurs, emerging from parts of the world never imagined, are connecting and innovating to drive social and economic development. Such connectivity across otherwise unconnected parts of the world or organizations is an incredibly powerful productivity driver and is creating new players and new opportunities for a variety of sectors.

Barclay's Dr. Kheradpir mentioned that the "consumerization" of technology is having a profound impact on the financial services sector, which is one of the most digitally-oriented businesses. Technologies that originated in the consumer space are now reshaping the way companies communicate and collaborate with customers, employees and partners. For example, South African farmers are using an agricultural app to completely transform how they get credit and how they connect with their suppliers, banks, etc. Established businesses such as big banks are tapping into the innovative expertise of the entrepreneurs to help transform financial services - investment banking, retail banking, corporate banking, etc.

While the spread of technology is great, just connecting and communicating via smart phones is not enough. People around the world need to understand each other's traditions, cultures, societal values and the unique challenges each faces. According to Mr. Mohammad Shafik Gabr, education is the key to a country's success, and it is important to ensure that we are learning as fast as the world is changing. Mr. Gabr's Foundation in Egypt is investing in youth and education, with the goal of enhancing critical understanding and cooperation among young emerging leaders in the Arab world and the West.

In sharing their thoughts on the way forward, panelists reiterated that a new global awareness of people at the bottom of the pyramid is summoning forth an unprecedented response to human need, which involves a shift from vertical to horizontal power. A new generation of global entrepreneurs and innovators is emerging who are more confident and more empowered than their previous generations, and they understand the need of our communities to adapt and change.