

# A CASE FOR GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

The world is at an historic inflection point. Throughout both the developing and developed world, people are unsure about their future and have lost faith in their leaders and their institutions. Is this an evolution of power or dissolution of order? We are seeing this in the rise of populism and xenophobia – from the rise of ISIS to Brexit and the rhetoric of America’s recent presidential election. While the tendency in this environment is to look towards nationalism and protectionism, the world is too globalized and interconnected for countries to solve domestic and international issues alone. Moreover, neither governments nor the private sector or civil society will be able to overcome these challenges on their own. We need networks of leaders from across sectors and throughout the world to come together and collaborate on global solutions for local problems.

On October 14, 2016, more than 150 of Washington’s top leaders met at the 5th Annual Meridian Global Leadership Summit to discuss “Restoring Confidence in Leadership and Institutions.” Panelists from the public and private sectors, as well as the diplomatic community, discussed the importance of global collaboration and cultural understanding in an increasingly dynamic and competitive international market, driven by the digital economy. While diverse opinions and prescriptions were voiced, the convened leaders agreed on several key points:

## “GOING IT ALONE” IS NOT A WINNING PROPOSITION.

In our interconnected world, protectionism and isolationism will not solve national or international challenges. Nor will bluster and bullishness. Data from Gallup World Poll indicates that the approval rating and likeability of a country’s leadership directly impacts its ability to influence other nations around the world and guide international policy solutions. The idea of soft power and global engagement is not a new one, but one that needs increasing support as it comes under attack in today’s political climate.

## EVERY PERSON, EVERY CULTURE, EVERY COUNTRY WANTS ITS INTERESTS PROTECTED.

Whether signing an international nuclear non-proliferation treaty or dealing with community pluralism for the first time, this is a simple reality that drives individual action. Ensuring all parties’ interests are being protected and their inspirations considered builds trust and allows for compromise and collaboration.

## THERE IS A COMMUNICATION FAILURE BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THEIR LEADERS.

There is no doubt that globalization and a free market economy create winners and losers as international comparative advantage dramatically shifts domestic markets. Leaders have failed to explain to their people the full scope of benefits in reaching beyond one’s borders. Globalization is causing a loss in the collective sense of self for many people, and leaders are not making their people feel as though their economic interests are being protected.

## CULTURE ALLOWS US TO HAVE FAITH IN INSTITUTIONS.

Culture is the embodiment of who we are as individuals and as nations. In a way, it is an expression or way of communication - dynamic and ever-changing while simultaneously deeply rooted in history. On the other hand, institutions are commonly understood ways people organize and interact with one another individually and as a people. In that sense, the effectiveness of our institutions are manifestations of and depend on a vibrant culture. If cultural foundations shift and come into conflict, institutions and people's faith in them is understandably shaken.

## ARTS AND CULTURE CAN BE A BRIDGE THROUGH DIFFICULT TRANSITIONS.

Arts and culture touch people's hearts and minds, and allow for a deeper understanding of what we have in common rather than what divides us. It is that "oneness" that can hold people together when dealing with difficult change. Culture can endure conflict to forge a path forward.

## DIPLOMACY IS SIMPLE, HARD, AND REPETITIVE - SO IS LEADERSHIP.

Diplomacy is one of the oldest and most difficult endeavors undertaken by governments. It is telling, that there is no diplomacy handbook; it is not an easy task. It takes hard work to listen to others who may be different and collaborate on solutions. This is true of leadership as well. Nobody works on solutions to transnational challenges because they are easy to tackle; they do it because it is important, and the right thing to do.

## LISTENING IS THE FOUNDATION OF GOOD POLICY.

In order to set policy that protects the needs of the people and craft institutions worthy of people's faith, you have to listen. Listening is the starting place for collaborative leadership. If you listen, people hear you differently as you lead and govern.

## INSTITUTIONS HAVE TO ADAPT TO REMAIN EFFECTIVE.

For generations, there have been institutions that govern separate spheres of the human experience. Government, business, and civil society are distinctions that can no longer be so rigid. Instead, all must work together - through effective global leadership - to innovate for global citizens. Transparency, information infrastructure, a conducive policy environment, and collaboration must be the goals as institutions adapt to remain effective and relevant.

The international political, economic, and cultural challenges we face today will not be solved in a sound bite, a news cycle, or an election. They require hard work, difficult decisions, and significant change. But they provide the opportunity for collaborative leadership to champion solutions that protect the interests of all global citizens. Together, we can accomplish great things.