



# Leading with the World in Mind



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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The capacity to lead in complex global contexts has become synonymous with adaptability, competitiveness, and entrepreneurial creativity. In a multipolar world, information, capital, products, and people reach across borders. Increasing interconnectivity is causing senior business executives the world over to call for greater global leadership in their organizations. They seek leaders who understand the effects of growing global interdependence on business and society, and who enable companies to meet new global demands and take full advantage of opportunities around the planet. Despite this visible demand, contemporary conceptualizations of global leadership stem either from traditional leadership studies or from cross-national comparisons more typical of a less globalized world.

In this paper, we share the results of a study of global leadership as construed by individuals heading international business initiatives in India, China, and the United States. Our goal is to advance an empirically informed characterization of global leadership in these three regions that can inform practice in the future. Two questions guide our study:

- 1. How do established global leaders working in the Asia-Pacific context define global leadership, the competencies required to succeed, and the conditions that enable them to lead across cultures?*
- 2. In what ways do informants' views of global leadership vary depending on the cultural contexts in which their lives and work unfold?*

## Rationale

Organizations around the world are facing stronger competition locally and globally. Emerging markets, especially in Asia, will drive global growth in the next few decades, adding companies and consumers at an unprecedented pace. Economists at HSBC,<sup>1</sup> Citi,<sup>2</sup> and PricewaterhouseCoopers<sup>3</sup> predict that by 2050, India, China, and the United States will be vying for the position of world's largest economy—with estimates of the size of their economies ranging from \$8.1 trillion to \$85.97 trillion in GDP. According to McKinsey Global Institute research, nearly 40% of global growth over the next 15 years will be produced by 400 midsize emerging-market cities,<sup>4</sup> with populations between 150,000 and 10 million, many of which are unfamiliar to today's leaders, such as Ahmedabad, India; Fushun, China; and Medan, Indonesia.<sup>5</sup> Global leaders the world over must understand these markets, as well as the cultural changes in which they are embedded, in order to leverage existing structures and anticipate opportunities and challenges.

Adapting to a changing world of business and responding to the pressing dynamics of an interconnected world are vital. From dealing with resource scarcity, to eradicating poverty, to curing disease, to nurturing talent, the problems and opportunities we face entail local manifestation of global trends. Across sectors, professionals in health, environment, culture, and security recognize the need for new forms of leadership. They often call for business leaders whose influence and responsibility extend beyond their company and shareholders or local environments to consider the larger global community. Education and job placement systems

have not yet adapted to the need for global leadership, international experience, and language skills. Around the world, companies are struggling to find, train, and retain such global leaders. At the same time, emerging leaders need to know the skills and competencies required to take on these leadership positions. McKinsey Global Institute research indicates that the US talent gap could reach 1.5 million graduates by the end of the decade, and China could face a shortage of 23 million college-educated workers in 2020.<sup>6</sup> According to a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers survey, 81% of CEOs in India see skills shortages as the greatest threat to their growth prospects.<sup>7</sup>

The global business community—particularly in China, India, and the United States—is seeking better ways to identify and develop global leaders. With the right talent, businesses can have the human capital to continue operating. With the right preparation, workers around the world can gain employment and support themselves and their families. Avoiding a shortage of skilled workers is becoming increasingly important as the world looks to businesses to do more than ever before. Public-private partnerships and the influence of business in traditionally public sector matters are growing. Increasingly, businesses are taking on new roles and collaborating with partners to address social and economic issues, on everything from upholding ethical standards to defining the post-2015 global development agenda.<sup>8</sup>

## Study Overview & Key Points

Fifty-four business leaders stratified by country participated in the study. While most did so by completing a detailed survey, 12 CEOs or presidents of large global companies and leading business schools—including General Atlantic, Duke Energy, China Europe International Business School, Mahindra & Mahindra—were selected for in-depth interviews (see Appendix A for a complete list of interviewees). A small comparison group of social entrepreneurs (N = 12) was surveyed and interviewed to amplify our repertoire of business practices and beliefs. A series of focus groups and conversations with experts provided additional feedback on emerging findings along the way. Our choice to focus our initial global leadership research upon China, India, and the United States reflects their status as the largest and most economically important nations in the region.

### Leading with the World in Mind: Summary

#### 1. A Global Leadership Framework Proposed

- Global leadership is the disposition to mobilize others to understand matters of local and global significance and act to seize opportunities and improve conditions.
- The core pillars of the global leadership framework are the dispositions to:
  - (1) Investigate the world to envision a better future;
  - (2) Understand and mobilize people across cultures;
  - (3) Maximize human development, growth, and innovation.

#### 2. Cultural Influences on Global Leadership

- While leaders across our sample used similar terms to describe global leadership, cultural backgrounds were associated with differences in the meanings attributed to similar expressions.
- In a globalized, interconnected world, *hybrid* leadership styles and cultural identities are seen as increasingly common.

#### 3. Global Responsibility: A New Point of Departure

- A strong sense of global responsibility is proposed as a hallmark of contemporary global leadership.

## A Global Leadership Framework Proposed

Drawing on our analysis of the available literature on global leadership and our analysis on informants' claims, we propose that global leadership can be framed as *the disposition to mobilize others to understand matters of local and global significance and act to seize opportunities and improve conditions*. Global leadership emerges as more than a set of skills or competencies on the one hand or traits on the other—we propose a *dispositional* view of global leadership in which competencies, inclinations, and character traits are integrated.

### Three foundational dispositions as desirable markers of global leadership

- (1) Global leaders are able and inclined to **investigate the world to envision a better future**. Global leaders are characterized as exhibiting curiosity and an inclination to understand and learn about countries, their history, and their changing cultural and economic environments. They are prone to draw on such understanding to frame a vision that resonates with others and can be translated into compelling, culturally respectful, and concrete initiatives. When envisioning the future and defining their direction, global leaders are seen as upholding ethical standards, balancing personal ambition and economic opportunity with improving global conditions.
- (2) Global leaders are viewed as able to **understand and mobilize people across cultures**. They can identify and examine their own and others' *cultural perspectives*, displaying respect, empathy, and considered judgment; they are able to *inspire* various stakeholders; they are inclined to *actively participate* in complex social environments and networks, developing views, compromises, and solutions that consider multiple perspectives; and they *effectively communicate* across differences.
- (3) Global leaders seek to **maximize human potential and innovation**. Leaders appear as committed to *their own continuing development* (e.g., through immersion in transnational learning and cultural experiences, cultivating leadership traits such as curiosity, resilience, optimism, and willingness to take risks) as well as *the development of others*. They are inclined to cultivate environments of continuous growth and innovation while nurturing a shared identity, trust, loyalty, and pride. Global leaders are seen as expanding such opportunities for growth and innovation by leading diverse teams, facilitating effective collaboration, cultivating transnational networks and partnerships, and assessing the effectiveness of such partnerships in an ongoing fashion.

## Cultural Influences on Global Leadership

Our exploration of leaders' perceptions of cultural influences on their leadership experiences and approaches yielded two key observations:

### Same language, different meanings

Cultural influences were evident among informants from the US, China, and India. Sometimes leaders associate different meanings to similar expressions. For example, both American and



Chinese leaders value leaders' capacity to take cultural perspective. And yet, leaders in the US viewed cultural perspective in more individualistic terms, as involving two individuals whose perspectives need to be put into dialogue or changed. The same phrase as discussed with informants in China and India often meant a more collective understanding of culture in which one exists, something that should be understood and accommodated.

Similarly, a disposition toward upholding ethics and local/global responsibility were prominent desirable features attributed to global leaders across our sample, but people had very different meanings for these terms. In India, leaders discussed their responsibility to a country managing and combating poverty; Chinese leaders referred to a national agenda of growth and the modeling of values; and in the US, ethics were more often framed in terms of the market, if mentioned at all.

### Hybrid styles and identities: The new normal in global leadership

We observe that leaders are increasingly shaped by multiple cultural influences, which hinders attempts at clear comparison among cultures. This blending or hybridity of cultures is enacted in various ways and allows leaders to increasingly lead and manage comfortably in diverse environments. Leaders described themselves as wearing multiple cultural hats, which they put into play depending on context. They spoke of multiple cultural influences and experiences during their upbringing as having prepared them to lead across contexts.

### Global Responsibility: A New Point of Departure

Emerging across our data is an emphasis on global leaders as individuals who are able to connect their own professional and their firm's goals to those of the larger global community. As discussed above, in this emerging view, *being a global leader begins with a commitment to the well-being of societies and environments beyond the individual's immediate circle of influence and often beyond national outlooks*. If an amplified sense of responsibility was present among informants in India and China, it emerged, perhaps not surprisingly, among self-identified social entrepreneurs.

## II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*If we look at economic developments [we, in China] not only [receive] foreign capital, but we also get management ideas, philosophy, strategic thinking from other companies from various countries. [Conversely, we in China can contribute to the West because] Confucianism can easily integrate many civilizations...the most important feature of Confucianism is...accommodating differences. Actually, if we reflect upon China's economic success in the past thirty years ... a key success factor is the accommodating and inclusive nature of Confucian culture (CB20).*

In today's interconnected world, leaders face new challenges and opportunities, and must possess different skills and competencies than were previously expected, such as comfort dealing with ambiguity and complexity, and the ability to work across cultural and linguistic differences. Globalization and advances in technology enable capital, goods, information, and people to easily move across borders. Simultaneously, global demographic changes and rapid urbanization in developing countries are causing a shift toward emerging markets. This increasing interconnectedness, and the opportunities for global cooperation and competition they present, accelerate the pace of innovation and require new business models and leadership styles. The ability to understand and navigate these changing global dynamics and the business, linguistic, and cultural landscape of developing markets is becoming increasingly important to success in international business.

Within this global economy, the rise of Asian nations and businesses, as both consumers and producers, is a pivotal development in the 21st century. According to the United Nations, approximately 60% of the world's population lives in Asia. By 2028, the population of India is projected to surpass that of China, and taken together the two countries will then account for almost 35% of the total world population.<sup>9</sup> During that period, the center of gravity of world production will also move toward Asia. Today's leaders must adapt to the influx of new companies and consumers, and know how to work in emerging markets—especially in Asia—in order to succeed.

Furthermore, these global forces are creating acute social and environmental issues and are placing increasing responsibility on businesses and individuals. Global challenges and associated opportunities, such as extreme poverty, the spread of preventable disease, and resource scarcity create consumers, employees, and stakeholders who are increasingly concerned with the impact and motivations of companies with whom they associate. Public-private partnerships are increasing and businesses are stepping into new roles, often with partners, to tackle social and economic challenges. Successful global leaders recognize that these changing dynamics and new challenges affect everything from supply chain and talent management to global health, climate change, and poverty. Across industries and sectors, there is growing recognition that the world needs global leaders who are able to identify these challenges and respond effectively, both for sustainable economic success and for the sake of a better global future.

Despite the increasingly important role of global business leaders, globally—and particularly in

the three countries that we examine in this study—companies are struggling to identify, develop, and retain skilled talent. Paradoxically, millions of young people around the world are unemployed. Rectifying this misalignment is essential if businesses are to operate with the appropriate human capital, and if workers are to provide for themselves and their families.

The international business community recognizes the need for a new leadership model that addresses these changing dynamics and seeks a clear framework for preparing emerging leaders to navigate the complex Asia-Pacific landscape. In order to create such a model or framework, we must first understand the skills and competencies required for successful global leadership in the region. We must examine how cultural values and leadership styles interact and influence one another to determine how to train young workers to lead in the Asia-Pacific context.

In this study, we investigate these issues empirically to determine what constitutes global leadership as experienced by practitioners in the Asia-Pacific context. We integrate the expertise of leadership scholars and the experience of established leaders in order to advance a framework that can inform efforts to identify, train, and assess emerging global leaders. In what follows, we begin with a review of the existing literature on global leadership and an overview of our methods. We then turn to our key points: We advance an empirically informed framework for global leadership in the Asia-Pacific region and characterize our study participants' views of global leadership and the influence of culture upon their understanding.

## The Emergence of Global Leadership

Whereas the phenomenon of leadership has intrigued researchers for many decades, global leadership has emerged more recently as an area of concentrated studies, typically as an outgrowth of traditional leadership theory and models. Historically, leadership studies began with a focus on leaders as individuals and examined how their personality, behavior, or actions enabled them to lead.<sup>10</sup> Over time, leadership scholars moved away from these leader-centric models and embraced theories that focus less upon the individual leader, and instead examine the interaction between leaders and followers. The focus on leadership shifted to the context, the relationship between the people, and the situation in which they found themselves. The evolution of global leadership models and theories has followed the same trajectory of the traditional leadership field, shifting from a belief that leadership is a universal or innate trait, to an understanding of skill sets or behaviors, to seeing leadership as defined by the interplay between individuals, skills, behaviors, and situations.

Today, accounts of global leadership and cross-cultural leadership comparisons abound. Characteristically, the literature on global leadership describes it as an extension of core leadership qualities. According to one approach, while cultural and economic environments may play a considerable role in shaping global leadership practices, leadership is considered *universal*. Any given model of leadership is applied equally across cultures (“a leader is a leader is a leader”). Other scholars focus on the personal skills of a global manager. They highlight specific “enduring personal skills and abilities...that are common to all managers regardless of where they are working” and assert that this personal skill set is the driving force that prepares the leader to

manage effectively around the world in highly diverse settings.<sup>11</sup> While these studies help unearth the “global mindset” and “cultural intelligence” that characterize global leadership, they are limited in their capacity to shed light on or take advantage of the cultural influences and global forces that shape leaders’ experiences and outlooks.<sup>12</sup>

Contrastingly, comparative studies of leadership embed leadership in cultural contexts and describe cultural influences on individuals’ definitions of leadership.<sup>13</sup> The well-respected GLOBE study, for example, has approached leadership from what Steers et al define as a *contingency* approach.<sup>14</sup>

Conceived of and led by Robert J. House of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, the GLOBE study used a team of international researchers to collect data across 62 countries. The researchers examined leadership in context, assuming that the qualities of effective leaders vary across cultures in highly patterned ways. They found that a leader’s effectiveness is contextual. In other words, leadership is embedded in the societal and organizational norms, values, and beliefs of the people being led. While the GLOBE study was not seeking to define or even examine global leadership, it had a profound impact on the study of global leadership as it proved that leadership is heavily shaped and influenced by culture. GLOBE researchers found that some leadership traits, such as being “dynamic, honest, and decisive,” are universally valued across cultures, whereas other traits such as “being irritable” and “ruthless” are universally undesirable. Studies embodying a contingency approach help us trace values and traits associated with leadership in broad strokes across cultures. Yet they are more limited in their capacity to depict the embodied experience of global leadership (e.g., the motivations, successes, contexts, shaping experiences, and ethical dilemmas that shape global leaders’ outlooks). These studies are also relatively limited in their ability to depict the dynamic cross-cultural influences in leadership styles that are to be expected in a rapidly interconnected world.<sup>15</sup>

The table below captures some of the differences in leadership style that GLOBE found between China, India, and the United States. These culturally distinct forms of leadership and the cultural values and sociopolitical context that shape them have been recognized and addressed across the comparative leadership literature.

## Differences in Leadership Style as Found in GLOBE Study<sup>1</sup>

	China	India	United States
<b>Leadership Style</b>	<p><b>Paternalistic Leadership:</b> Leaders act as father figures to their subordinates, and in return, receive the complete trust and loyalty of their people.<sup>16</sup></p>	<p><b>Paternalistic Leadership or Transformational Leadership:</b> Leaders engage with others and create connections that result in increased motivation and morality in both followers and leaders.<sup>17, 18</sup></p>	<p><b>Participative or Empowering Leadership:</b> Responsibility is shared with subordinates; leaders are able to energize people in the company.<sup>19</sup></p> <p><b>Charismatic Leadership:</b> Subordinates follow leaders because they are inspiring.<sup>20</sup></p>
<b>Defining Cultural Values</b>	<p><b>Confucianism:</b> Places high value upon hierarchical social relationships and is fundamentally concerned with achieving social harmony. People are not viewed as isolated individuals but as inseparable from their relationships with others.<sup>21</sup></p> <p><b>Collectivism:</b> Chinese social interaction affords little privacy, leading to a corresponding stress on the need to maintain harmony. This leads to a strong emphasis on consensus, conformity, and group cohesion.<sup>22</sup></p>	<p><b>Centrality of Family and Community, a core tenant of Hinduism:</b> Influences leadership as leaders are expected to take an interest in the personal life, well-being, and continued development of their employees.<sup>23</sup></p> <p><b>Caste System:</b> Indian society is still rigidly hierarchical, and vestiges of the caste system still influence the organizational structures of business firms, which tend to be rigidly hierarchical as well.<sup>24</sup></p>	<p><b>Individualism:</b> American society is highly individualistic. This individualism is reinforced by the deeply embedded notion of the “American Dream” —the idea that people with good work ethics can distinguish themselves on the basis of their individual achievements.<sup>25</sup></p>

<b>Institutional Factors</b>	<b>The Communist Party:</b> Traditionally, most business leaders reported to the Communist Party, maintaining dual identities as subordinates in the party and managers in their firms. <sup>26</sup> As reform turns the economy into a market-based system with socialistic characteristics, many business leaders are feeling increasing pressure from the central government to speed up the economic development of the areas in which they work. <sup>27</sup>	<b>Poor Infrastructure and Government Bureaucracy:</b> Indian business leaders must often supply and organize their own infrastructure and materials. They invest in social and economic development programs for the general public because they recognize the long-term benefit of these investments. <sup>28</sup>	<b>American Democracy:</b> American democratic political values and ideals heavily influence business structures, causing US businesses to often be flat organizations and subordinates at all levels to be valued for their contribution and expected to play an active role in leadership. The same values of individualism and US capitalism cause status or hierarchy established through merit or individual achievement to be generally accepted. <sup>29</sup>
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<sup>1</sup> This table is by the authors of this paper using three chapters from *Culture and Leadership Across the World: The GLOBE Book of In-Depth Studies of 25 Societies*. The specific chapters cited are noted within the table above.

## The Need to Define Global Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Given the global dynamics shaping today's world and the vastly different values, contexts, and culturally distinct leadership models available, the need for a clear framework to understand global leadership is apparent. The question is how can such different leadership models, contexts, and expectations be understood and reconciled now that people are increasingly working together to address shared global opportunities and challenges? Due to such differing and often contrasting definitions and models of leadership across cultures, scholars today seek to develop global leadership frameworks that take cultural differences into account and can be applied across borders and cultures.<sup>30</sup> The table below provides a list of the leading definitions of global leadership over the past 15 years.

## Leading Definitions of Global Leadership

Author(s)	Definition
<b>Adler (1997)</b>	Global leadership involves the ability to inspire and influence the thinking, attitudes, and behavior of people from around the world... [it] can be described as a “process by which members of the world community are empowered to work together synergistically toward a common vision and common goals resulting in an improvement in the quality of life on and for the planet.” Global leaders are those people who most strongly influence the process of global leadership. <sup>31</sup>
<b>Gregersen et al (1998)</b>	Leaders who can guide organizations that span diverse countries, cultures, and customers. <sup>32</sup>
<b>McCall and Hollenbeck (2002)</b>	Simply put, global executives are those who do global work. With so many kinds of global work, again depending on the mix of business and cultural crossings involved, there is clearly no one type of global executive. Executives, as well as positions, are more or less global depending upon the roles they play, their responsibilities, what they must get done, and the extent to which they cross borders. <sup>33</sup>
<b>Caligiuri and Tarique (2009)</b>	Global leaders [are] high-level professionals such as executives, vice presidents, directors, and managers who are in jobs with some global leadership activities such as global integration responsibilities. Global leaders play an important role in developing and sustaining a competitive advantage. <sup>34</sup>
<b>Cabrera and Unruh (2012)</b>	Global leaders...have developed a global mindset, global entrepreneurship, and global citizenship. Their global mindset allows them to connect with others across boundaries; their entrepreneurship enables them to create value through those connections; and their citizenship motivates them to seek a positive contribution. <sup>35</sup>
<b>Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, Maznevski, Stevens, and Stahl (2013)</b>	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. <sup>36</sup>

## What is Missing from Leading Definitions?

While these definitions are the result of thoughtful work in the field of global leadership, existing definitions of global leadership present four significant challenges: First, according to leading scholars, a weak empirical base and divergent theoretical orientations have resulted in a multitude of diverse, often conflicting, conceptualizations of global leadership and associated best practices. This has led to the explosion of a fast-growing leadership training industry that is, at best, loosely grounded on a rigorous understanding of leadership.<sup>37</sup> Second, definitions of global leadership, such as the ones noted above, whether visibly broad or purely practical, do not emphasize the larger backdrop of economic and cultural forces against which global leadership occurs. Third, available global leadership definitions are relatively silent on the extent to which leaders feel (or should feel) a sense of responsibility to the large and increasingly interdependent global community. Lastly, while there have been scholarly efforts to create models that recognize and blend Eastern and Western cultural values and models of leadership, there is still a lack of clear and practical frameworks to guide leaders working across the cultures of the Asia-Pacific region.

In this study, we begin to address these complex issues by exploring how established leaders working in transnational enterprises navigate today's shifting global dynamics and culturally diverse landscape. We seek to contribute to the field of leadership studies by advancing an empirically informed characterization of global leadership as experienced by individuals in three different countries: China, India, and the United States. In an effort to inform global leadership education initiatives, we draw on our informants' experience to advance a framework for global leadership that highlights desirable competencies and dispositions.

### Two questions guide our work:

- 1. How do established global leaders working in the Asia-Pacific context define global leadership, the competencies required to succeed, and the conditions that enable them to lead across cultures?*
- 2. In what ways do informants' views of global leadership vary depending on the cultural contexts in which their lives and work unfold?*

## Study Methods

Our complete sample includes 54 senior global leaders, stratified by country (China, India, and the US). We gathered leaders' perspectives through a *survey* (N = 43) designed to elicit their motivations, theories, practices, dilemmas, and forming experiences in global leadership. Twelve *in-depth interviews* with select CEOs and presidents of global organizations enabled us to delve deeply into our subjects' experience more fully, probing specific areas such as their life story, transformative experiences, dilemmas, and perceptions of self, others, and the field (see Appendix A for complete list). A small comparison group of self-identified and leading social entrepreneurs (N = 12) were surveyed and interviewed to amplify our repertoire of business practices and beliefs. Finally, *focus groups* across the three regions served verification purposes, as individuals commented on our emerging understandings of global leadership. Three rounds of data analysis were conducted by two researchers. First, a content analysis of the full corpus yielded



key ideas about global leadership and narrated examples of practice. An initial framework for global leadership based on informants' ideas and available literature yielded new categories for analysis. These categories informed our coding of the data in round two. Additional modifications to the framework were informed by this key coding phase and were eventually polished through a final corroborative analysis of focus group input, comparative analysis across cultural contexts, and data on social entrepreneurs.

### III. KEY POINTS

In our study, global leaders emerge as seeking to understand our interconnected world and mobilize people across cultures to seize opportunities and improve global conditions. Collectively, these individuals draw their strength from a deep understanding of geopolitical and economic dynamics, sophisticated intercultural expertise, and their capacity to identify and nurture talent and innovation. Our analysis yields three main contributions to the growing field of global leadership studies.

Global leadership is the disposition to mobilize others to understand matters of local and global significance and act to seize opportunities and improve conditions.

First, we advance a *dispositional framework of global leadership* that is rooted in the experiences of global leaders in the domain of business. We propose that global leadership is the *disposition to mobilize others to understand matters of local and global significance and act to seize opportunities and improve conditions*. Embedded in this are three core dispositions that global leaders demonstrate: (1) they investigate the world to envision a better future; (2) they understand and mobilize people across cultures; and (3) they maximize human potential and innovation. From this dispositional standpoint, global leaders do more than have the skill or ability to lead; they are sensitive to opportunities to exercise such leadership and inclined to doing so over time.

Second, we show how contextual influences appear to inform individuals' views of global leadership. While on the surface, global leaders across regions point to similar qualities or skills (e.g., the capacity to take cultural perspective), they often interpret these features differently, revealing contextual orientations. Perhaps most importantly, the leaders we interviewed often revealed *hybrid* leadership styles, whereby multiple cultural influences coexist in their work.

Finally, we reflect on the role that "global responsibility" (i.e., a leader's sense of accountability for shaping our shared global future) can serve as a key compass for global leadership in the business domain.

## A Global Leadership Framework Proposed

We conceptualize global leadership as the disposition to mobilize others to understand matters of local and global significance and act to seize opportunities and improve conditions. Global leaders, as here characterized, *understand and inquire about local manifestations of global dynamics* pertaining to their areas of work. They continuously take the pulse of society by considering key global developments—from climate change to the digital revolution—that affect the lives of people the world over and determine economic, cultural, and environmental realities and possibilities. Today’s global leaders work with others to pursue a vision, leveraging diversity to *realize and act upon expanded opportunity*. Finally, global leaders recognize and embrace their *growing global responsibility and ability to improve conditions*.

We created this aggregate framework by drawing on our analysis, in which our informants’ responses converge on three foundational dispositions as desirable core qualities of this framework of global leadership: (1) to investigate the world to envision a better future, (2) to understand and mobilize people across cultures, and (3) to maximize human potential and innovation. These dimensions were addressed by 100%, 98%, and 81% of our sample, respectively.

In what follows, we reflect on the choice of framing global leadership qualities as dispositions, rather than competencies, skills, or traits. We then examine each disposition in depth.

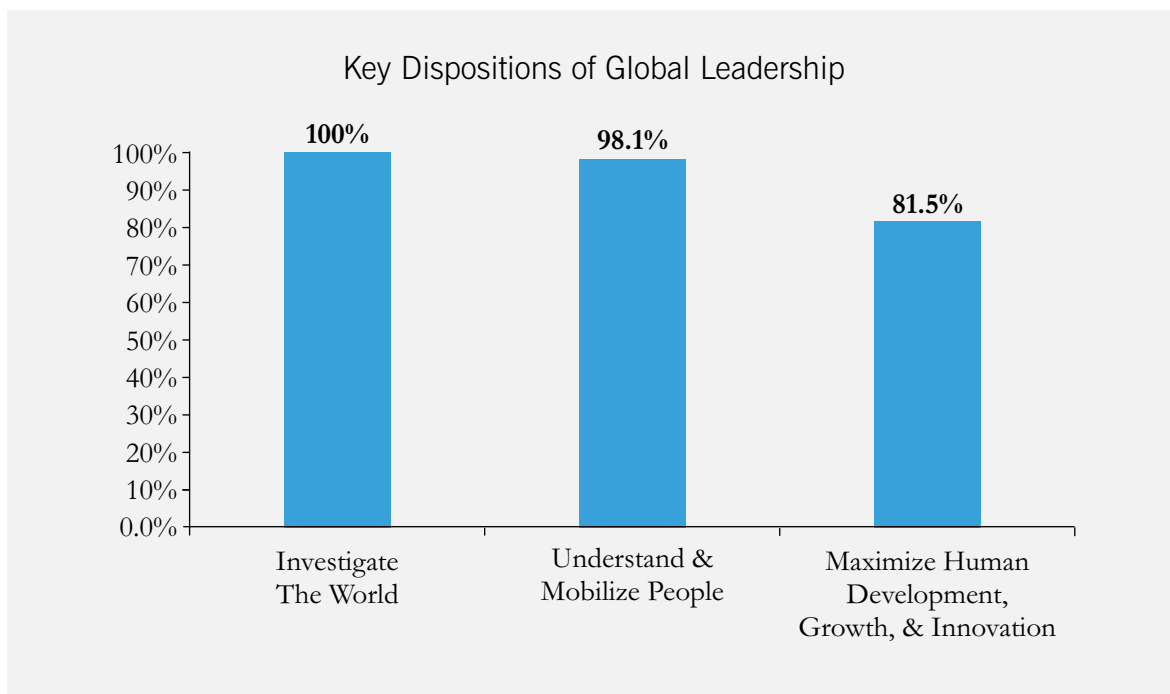
## A Dispositional View of Global Leadership

Our informants’ claims reveal a nuanced picture of global leadership. These informants conceived global leadership as a *competence* or *ability*, highlighting capacities that ranged from understanding of global market trends to taking cultural perspective or engaging international teams. In their definitions, they often moved beyond competence to cast global leadership as a “mindset” (e.g., a more or less stable outlook on the world and an *inclination* to think, feel, or act in ways that take local and global realities into account). For example, they addressed the inclination to keep abreast of global dynamics, to be curious, to take perspective, to navigate complex social environments, and to experience empathy, compassion, and joy when learning about other cultures. Their descriptions suggest that an inclination for global leadership is learned and becomes a relatively stable orientation or outlook on the world and one’s role in it. Finally, some individuals referred to global leadership as a matter of *character traits* and values including charisma, wisdom, humility, worldliness, and integrity. Charisma is viewed as inviting followers from multiple cultures to identify with the leader, suggesting a relational view of leadership by which followership is constitutive of leadership.

Our research uncovered that experts’ characterizations of desirable qualities of global leadership moved visibly beyond a collection of skills. Our informants’ descriptions aligned with these characterizations, particularly echoing Beechler’s and Javidan’s (2007) extensive work on “global mindset,” which depicts “cross-cultural leadership and global leadership [as a] constellation of cognitions, behaviors repertoires, and behaviors” that individuals have at their disposal to apply in

appropriate settings.<sup>38</sup> Most interestingly, taken together, our informants' characterizations of global leadership echo the three core tenets of disposition theory, an approach developed by cognitive scientists Perkins, Ritchhart, and Tishman in the domain of thinking. "Dispositions" entail an individual's ability to perform a given cognitive task, their *sensitivity to opportunities* to use such abilities, and an inclination to doing so over time.<sup>39, 40</sup> Perkins and colleagues focus on learnable thinking dispositions such as evidence-based reasoning and perspective taking. We propose that global leadership dispositions, too, are learned. They embody a capacity that exceeds skill or competence to include an individual's *ability* to recognize opportunities to exercise leadership and an *inclination* to lead over time. Building on a view of global leadership as a disposition, we turn to an analysis of the qualities that our informants associated with global leaders and outline the framework we seek to advance.

## Three Key Dispositions of Global Leadership



### (1) A disposition to investigate the world to envision a better future

Predominant in our informants' conception of global leadership is the ability to *make sense of the interconnected dynamics of our contemporary world*. All informants (100%) addressed this capacity or disposition explicitly. Most (98%) characterized global leaders as exhibiting curiosity and an inclination to understand and learn about countries and their history, as well as changing global economic, cultural, political, and social contexts. As one informant shared:

*I think different people, different cultures think differently, and usually they are affected by history, the philosophical underpinnings of a culture, and the recognition of those are very important. But I would say it is not just the cognitive recognition. Better yet, if you have both the emotive (or intuitive) identity as well as the cognitive understanding. [To be a global leader]...I think the cognitive understanding of another country's history is very useful. If you don't have that intuitive identification, at least you have the cognitive understanding of it, and in particular, some of the history and philosophical underpinnings of a country (CB18).*

These informants went further, viewing leaders as able and inclined to draw on such understanding of the world to frame a compelling and farsighted vision that resonates with others and engages issues of global significance and their local relevance (74%). Global leaders, these individuals pointed out, work with others to translate problems into compelling, culturally respectful, and concrete global action strategies and structures (68%). Perhaps most importantly, informants highlighted that in envisioning the future and defining their direction, global leaders must uphold ethical standards (78%); they must reflect carefully upon the ethical dilemmas they encounter and model ethical leadership, balancing personal ambition and economic opportunity with improving global conditions.

Global leadership entails the disposition to investigate the changing global dynamics of our contemporary world in order to envision a future.

References to the importance of investigating the world and envisioning a future world abounded across interviews. Understanding of local contexts and global dynamics was seen as informing leaders' visions as well as enhancing their effectiveness.

In envisioning future directions with others, leaders were often highly cognizant of how their decisions impact others. Some sensed their responsibility for creating value for their stakeholders (USB23). A few leaders aligned responsibility with national goals, viewing the company as a community asset that contributes to the economic transformation and social progress of the country (CB19, CB20, and CB21). Similarly, some individuals viewed responsibility as a matter of "changing people's lives for the better...making an impact and empowering others" (CB19).

## (2) A disposition to understand and mobilize people across cultures

Among our informants, intercultural understanding featured prominently as a characteristic of global leaders as well; 98% of our informants addressed this overall disposition as key. Among them, most described global leaders as individuals who can identify and examine their own and others' *cultural perspectives*, displaying respect, empathy,

Global leaders are inclined to understand cultural perspectives, communicate across differences, engage others, and participate actively in diverse social environments.

and considered judgment (94%). Leaders are able to *inspire* various stakeholders and participate actively in complex social environments and networks to contribute to the organizations' vision (92.5%). In multiple cases, global leaders were described as disposed to *participate actively* in complex social environments and networks, developing views, compromises, and solutions that consider multiple perspectives (55%). Global leaders were seen as able to *communicate effectively* across differences, using the appropriate language, medium, or contextually appropriate communication styles (30%). “Strong cultural fluencies,” “cultural sensitivity,” and “multicultural understanding”—these descriptions and many others synonymous with them peppered our informants' responses to the question of what capacities characterize global leadership. For many, cultural sensitivity begins with open-mindedness. Others depicted this disposition as essential to their practice in careful detail:

*I've always put myself in the shoes of the person that I'm dealing with or talking to, and I say to myself: Now, if I were there, what would I say to me about what I'm saying to him in that context? And the second thing, of course, is to be able to understand and appreciate the culture of the person or the place or the company that you're dealing with. And even if you speak the common language of English, that your answers are different, you know, as you—it doesn't matter if—even with the US, doesn't matter if—even within the East and West Coasts of the United States, I'm sure that there are subtle differences, let alone Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Pacific, and within, you know, an Asian context in particular (CB21).*

Informants commented on various ways in which leaders engage others. For some, engagement is rooted in inspiring others through the exhibition of personal virtues, while for others it is rooted in the capacity to “empathize and comprehend issues across geographic and cultural barriers and help others to bridge their divides” (USB08). Still others saw leaders as exhibiting an “unwavering decisiveness during times of crisis and the ability to motivate and mobilize people to come together and work towards a common set of objectives” (USB12). Informants frequently viewed the capacity to engage others as a means to ensure business success, including the generation of value (CB08).

*[W]e have CEOs in the US; we have CEOs in India. Some things that work in India don't work in the US, and so our effort has always been that they need to understand people at people level. Be very sensitive. Look at local cultural issues. Because if you have a better understanding of that, ultimately, you have to motivate people and get work out of them, and provide them empowerment, and then be able to deliver. So, how do you motivate people? You have to understand how they think—that's cultural sensitivity (IB07).*

### (3) A disposition to maximize human development, growth, and innovation

A majority of informants (82%) view global leaders as committed to *their own continuing development* (e.g., through immersion in transnational learning and cultural experiences, cultivating leadership traits such as curiosity, resilience, optimism, and willingness to take risks). Global leaders are also seen as nurturing other people's talent—especially among diverse populations, identifying talent in various localities, empowering them, and setting high expectations and accountability for all. Sixteen percent of the informants saw this as a defining capacity of global leaders. The majority of our informants (79.5%) highlighted the essential role of (and their involvement in) education in the promotion of global leadership.

Many informants recognized leaders' inclination to cultivate environments of continuous growth and innovation, where ideas are expressed freely and safely, best practices are incorporated regardless of their global provenance, and growth is nurtured and monitored. Informants described environments that foster organizational innovation while nurturing a shared identity, trust, loyalty, and pride

Global leaders nurture their own development, as well as the development of others; they identify and develop talent across cultural borders and create environments that facilitate innovation and growth.

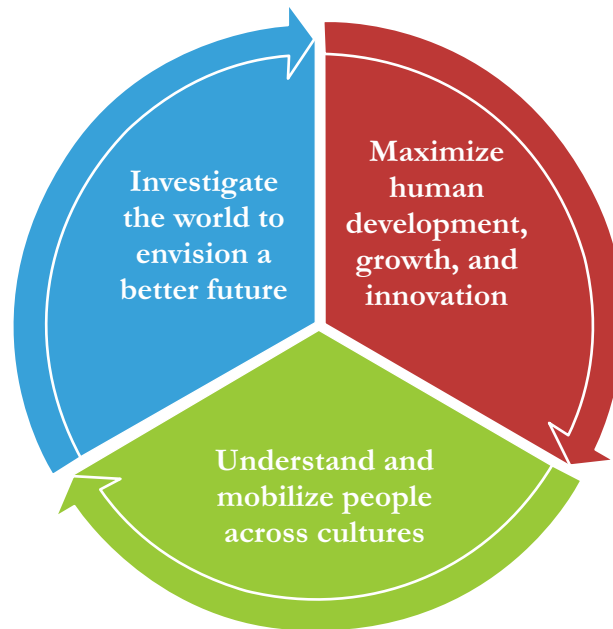
(55%). Global leaders are seen as expanding such opportunities for growth and innovation by leading diverse teams, facilitating effective collaboration, cultivating transnational networks and partnerships, and assessing the effectiveness of such partnerships in an ongoing fashion (55%).

The capacity to maximize human development, growth, and innovation was evident in informants' statements. They spoke of the importance of nurturing one's sense of self to prepare to innovate in ambiguous local and global terrains. One respondent valued:

*[T]he very ability to question, to be willing to evolve, and not to be fixed actually has a certain level of strong sense of self. The confidence that this is not going to get you up the rail...to actually be open, reflect, look at things. [The] notion of leadership, to be really successful, is less about control and more about willingness to take chances (USB24).*

## Global Leadership Revisited

In sum, our analysis of informants' characterization of global leadership suggests that seasoned global leaders view their expertise as more than having a body of knowledge, skills, or character traits. They view global leadership as an outlook on the world and on their role in it—a disposition to mobilize themselves and others to understand and act on matters of global significance. Overall, global leaders were viewed in a positive light—as featuring highly desirable qualities.



**Figure 1** Global leadership as three constitutive and interrelated dispositions

As the graphic above suggests, our analysis reveals three constitutive and interrelated dispositions of global leadership: (1) a disposition to investigate the world to envision a better future; (2) to understand and mobilize people across cultures, and (3) to maximize human development, growth, and innovation.

Taken individually, each disposition represents a collection of sensitivities, abilities, and inclinations highlighted by leaders as markers of global leadership. However, leaders addressed multiple dispositions at once. Taken together, a framework for global leadership can be advanced as *the disposition to mobilize others to understand matters of local and global significance and act to seize opportunities and improve conditions*. This conception of global leadership addresses the leader's role as one of *mobilizing* and inspiring. It deliberately avoids the view that leaders know the world, to single-handedly craft a vision to be followed. Instead, capturing the spirit shared by our informants, the framework emphasizes the disposition to *investigate and understand the world and how it works* and promote others' understanding of current global and local interdependence, and cultural, economic, and political dynamics to create workable solutions, products, and value. Our framework emphasizes the purposeful nature of global leadership, in that it focuses on *seizing opportunities and improving conditions* through innovation and talent development.

Our informants differed greatly in the meaning and relative significance that they attributed to each disposition. To understand some of these distinctions in depth we now turn to the cultural domain and biographical influences shaping their views of global leadership.

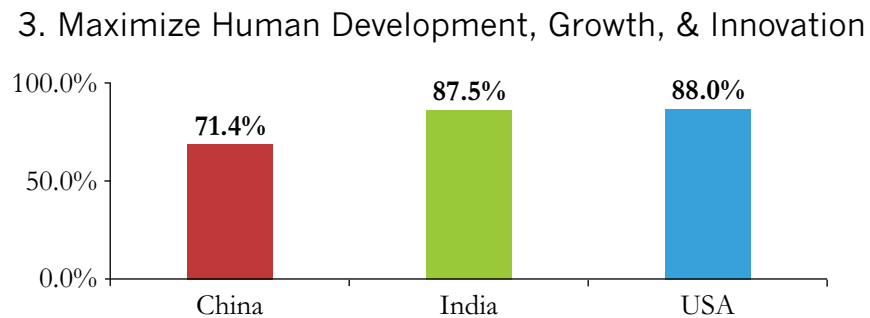
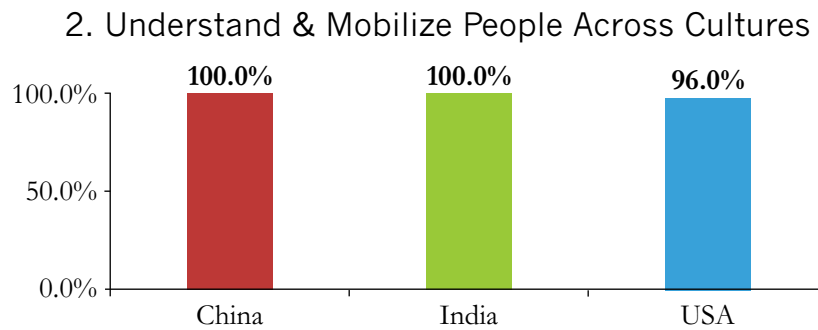
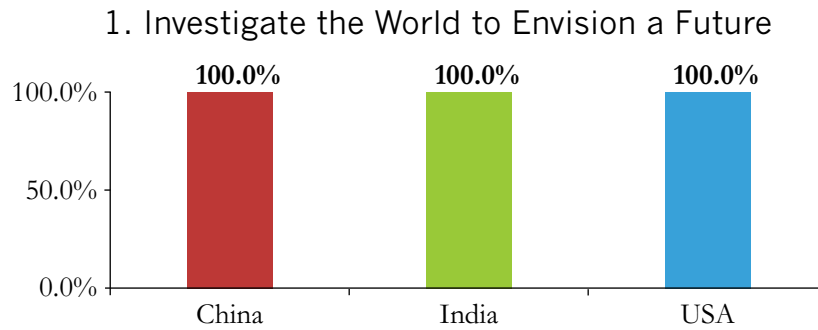
## How Do Cultures Influence Views of Global Leadership?

Informants declared primary affiliation to a selected country—China, India, or the United States—according to where they grew up or spent most of their lives. Perhaps not surprisingly, they recognized important cultural and historical influences of their countries on their outlooks and leadership practices. In what follows, we turn our attention to some of these influences. We do so not because culture can be seen as “determining” individuals’ stance on global leadership, nor because cultures are monolithic in their capacity to shape individuals’ experience, but because by juxtaposing cultural perspectives we gain a more nuanced understanding of the variations in leaders’ conceptions of their practice. Our exploration of cultural influences on leadership experiences and approaches yielded two key observations: (1) Leaders address similar qualities, yet attribute different meanings to them; (2) Hybrid cultural styles and identities emerge as the new normal in global leadership.

## Same Language, Different Meanings

Across the sample, respondents from all three countries conceptualized global leaders as able to investigate the world to envision a better future, especially in developing an understanding of global economic, cultural, political, and social contexts of different countries over time. They also saw the importance of global leaders being able to understand and mobilize people across cultures. Similarly, a high proportion of respondents from all three countries recognized the role of global leaders in maximizing human development, growth, and innovation, with informants from China referring to these dimensions less frequently.



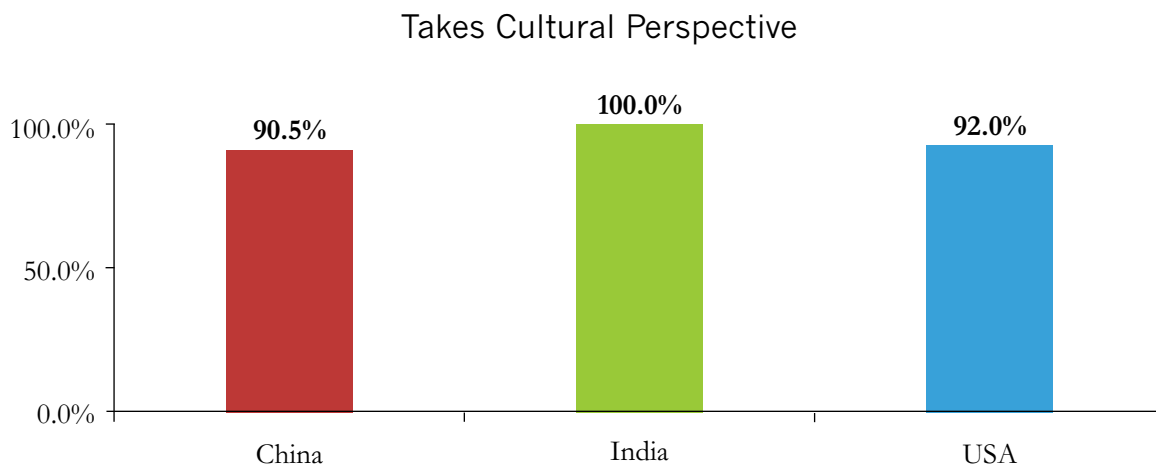


While responses across countries of affiliation converged on the dimensions of global leadership identified, closer examination of the data revealed telling differences within each dimension. Differences were visible in terms of the relative frequency with which they address the markers of global leadership identified earlier, but they were mostly visible in the meaning informants attributed to such leadership qualities. In what follows, we illustrate this point by examining two qualities of global leadership for which informants used a similar language across contexts but assigned different meanings to similar terms. The examples reveal cultural assumptions and the influence of sociocultural contexts in leaders' conceptions of their roles.

### Global leaders are able to take cultural perspective

As the figure below suggests, informants across regions place high value on perspective taking. All Indian informants referred to this feature, while 90.5% and 92% of their counterparts in China and the US did so, respectively. Upon close scrutiny, their responses reveal a telling difference. US business leaders were more likely to describe the ability to take cultural perspective as

understanding individuals' perspectives (self and others') to be considered, understood and, most typically, influenced. Chinese leaders in turn were more inclined to view cultural perspectives as collective beliefs, values, and mindsets that are shared across members of the same culture. With this emphasis on the collective group over individual perspectives, distinct cultural perspectives are seen less as something to influence or change and more as complex environments to be navigated and differences to be accommodated.



While the nuances here described stem from comparing informants' responses along cultural lines, it was the informants' own characterizations of cultural influences that enabled us to interpret their statements in more robust ways. For example, one Chinese leader claimed that "Confucianism is a very important philosophy, and the unique feature of Confucianism is accommodating differences," which in turn leverages Chinese leaders to engage diverse perspectives and integrate them in a whole (C3). The capacity to accommodate differences influences negotiation styles. Living in cosmopolitan Hong Kong, where difference is the norm, led one informant's firm to engage foreign companies' perspectives in "less of an adversarial relationship, but more of a real partnership relationship. That has a little bit of an Asian flavor in management, so we were successful" (C2).

This "Asian-flavored" and less individual-centered approach to perspective taking in global business interactions is also apparent in this informant's cultural preference for long-term temporal frames that proportionally diminish the significance of individual interests:

*We [Chinese] say we are the continuing civilization for 5000 years. This doesn't necessarily make us better than the US or Western civilization, but the important thing is to be able to think of long-term sustainability (CB19).*

In this informant's view, long-termism is associated with better practices and collective interest. He contrasted this orientation with the one that became apparent during the global financial crisis of 2008. He explained, "The weaknesses in companies that encounter tremendous failure are within—where the incentive structure is very short-term oriented and it does not really reward patience." He argued that such short-term orientation is

*kind of a culture—a capital structure [sic] where somehow people are brought up in an environment where that kind of behavior is encouraged. We need to have some kind of a rethinking. I see the loss of a shared common ground, and it is not just Western companies, even in Asian companies there is a loss of a sense of long-term loyalty between employer and employee, and shareholders or other stakeholders.*

In making this observation, this informant, like many others we interviewed, highlighted the ways in which business practices, values, and norms travel around the world, rendering global leadership practices increasingly fragmented, hybrid, and changing—a point to which we return later in this paper.

## Global leaders uphold ethical standards

A disposition toward upholding ethics was a prominent feature attributed to global leaders across our sample. This quality was addressed with slightly different levels of frequency by our informants from each country: India 100%, China 81%, and US 68%. Perhaps most interestingly, our findings demonstrated that informants' views differed in the meaning they attributed to even the word or concept of “ethics.” For instance, informants from India emphasized the role of businesses in societies marred with poverty and inequality. Responsible innovation was often seen as a path to economic growth and well-being.



Among informants from China, a commitment to ethics was cast in the form of values. Global leaders are expected to embody the kinds of values expected from their organizations—leading by example. Among US informants, ethics was addressed comparatively less overall, and important differences emerged between individuals who work in the field of social entrepreneurship and those who work in traditional corporate or finance contexts. The former envisioned contributing to the well-being of global societies as the primary purpose of their work and thus the mission towards which they felt primarily responsible. Their corporate counterparts, on the other hand, viewed the strengthening of market economies as a frame for their work and creating value for their shareholders and delivering services to their stakeholders as their primary responsibility.

That the majority of respondents indicated a disposition to uphold ethics was worthy of further inquiry given the high-profile ethical scandals and stories of corruption that have recently

emerged from the business sector in each of these three countries. If this sample of global leaders across all three countries is representative and they articulated that ethical leadership is important, what should we make of the cases of insider trading in the US, contaminated milk being produced in China, and far-reaching business and government collusion in India? Leaders in our sample emphasized their personal belief in the importance of ethical leadership, with ease. They also addressed general challenges faced by leaders in their daily work (from finding time to reflect to ensuring trust in their networks). Nevertheless, few leaders addressed specific ethical dilemmas they confronted nor ethical breaches such as the ones noted in the scandals above. Yet because the issue is essential in understanding contemporary global leadership, we revisit the question of ethics in the Global Responsibility section below.

In sum, our analysis suggests that when our informants considered global leadership dispositions such as the capacity for cultural perspective-taking and the upholding of ethical standards, they often revealed the influence of cultural norms and values. Leaders varied in the degree to which they recognized such influences explicitly. Several interviewees were very clear about cultural influences in others and themselves. Others showed skepticism toward cultural explanations for individual behavior but expressed culturally relevant values throughout their own responses in the interview. Our study reveals what anthropologists have long known: Behind a seemingly common language lay a world of deeply engrained cultural meanings. As a result, cross-regional frameworks for global leadership, like the one we advance in our work, must allow room for nuance and variations in meaning as it is interpreted and appropriated by leaders in diverse contexts and contingencies.

## Hybrid Cultural Styles and Identities: The New Normal in Global Leadership

In today's interconnected world, people are increasingly shaped by multiple cultural influences and often identify with this confluence of cultures rather than any one individually. The individuals in our study were no exception. Among our informants, we observed that hybridity—the mix, juxtaposition, and blending of cultural influences—ranged from adopting cultural styles to adapt to new cultural environments, to fully embodying a bi- or multicultural identity, to feeling at ease in multiple and often contrasting environments. For these individuals, the ability to reconcile multiple cultural influences was a key aspect of contemporary global leadership. They sought to find a strategic balance among influences and manage these identities in pursuit of larger goals.

Influencing forces vary. They include the multicultural nature of an early family experience (such as being raised with pride in one's mixed background), youth travels, the influence of foreigners, readings, films, teachers, or a cosmopolitan city able to nurture growing curiosity about a complex and diverse world.

Across our sample, informants shared their stories of encounters with new cultures. Oftentimes, formal educational experiences shaped our informants' outlooks in noticeable ways. Their stories reveal the impact of transnational experiences on opening young people's minds to the world. In

our informants' experience, living, studying, and working abroad did more than enhance their cultural sensitivity; it contributed to the development of hybrid cultural identities in which multiple cultural influences coexist, overlap, influence one another, and are emphasized and called upon according to the cultural context in which the leaders find themselves. For instance, according to one global leader:

*Fortunately, a guy like me, who went to the United States at the age of 17, lived there 16 years—so I can now—I've become truly bicultural. I can be in China and be 100% Chinese, or can be in America and 100% American. That is a useful trait to have: biculturalism. But I think you cannot demand that of others (CB18).*

In fact, as this example suggests, cultural hybridity seems to invite our leaders to manage more complex forms of participation and belonging. To be effective, they have learned to foreground particular aspects of their multifaceted identity, depending on the requirements of the context at hand. One Chinese informant, for example, explained how he balances his cultural identities by deliberately switching hats.

Perhaps most telling, our analysis points to the importance of avoiding two kinds of oversimplifications when charting cultural influences on global leadership ideas: (1) the idea that global leadership beliefs and practices exist in cultural silos spared of influence and (2) the related idea that global leadership practices are homogeneous within one cultural frame. As we have shown, leadership practices (especially global leadership practices) influence one another across borders, and multiple forces (regional, political, disciplinary, historical) flavor business practices, commitments, and responsibilities. Our analysis confirms that global leaders experience *multiple* cultural influences throughout their lives, yielding various degrees and forms of hybridity in their outlook and identity.

## Global Responsibility: A New Point of Departure

Throughout our interviews, we asked leaders to describe the purpose of their work. Our analysis revealed the broad range of purposes and the related sense of responsibility such purposes engender. Several American businessmen described the purpose of their work fundamentally in terms of creating value for their companies and their shareholders. As such, they characterized global enterprises as a matter of capitalizing on the opportunities emerging from new markets and talent pools. When probed, they described the services offered in exchange with pride (e.g., “bringing electricity to new regions of the world” or developing novel industries that hire talented youth).

For several Chinese business informants, responsibility was also framed in the context of a national agenda for growth. Perhaps this is not surprising in a context of a centralized economy where businesses are often owned or influenced by the government and are led by public officials who prioritize national growth. Describing the role of a business school in China, one informant visibly toed the party line when he stated:

*[W]e must train more managers with global horizon to promote economic transformation and social progress for the country. It is the dream of the Chinese government and the Chinese people to build a prosperous and wealthy country; so we all share that vision (C3).*

Some informants brought an even more encompassing responsibility frame to their work. Aware of the urgent need for growth and development in their surroundings, these individuals characterized global leaders as individuals who are able to connect their individual and their firm's goals to those of the larger global community and express a sense of responsibility for the well-being of many. Another informant even claimed:

*I think global leadership besides business success and all that...I would say that a very strong characteristic of global leadership is to really change the life or quality of life of a sizeable number of people for the better, making an impact—that's global leadership (CB19).*

Nowhere was this broader global perspective more prominent than among the comparison group of social entrepreneurs in our sample. For these individuals, being a global leader begins with a commitment to the well-being of societies and environments beyond their immediate circles of influence and national outlooks. "Today's leadership requires that one keeps a particular focus on social responsibility and sustainable business development," (CSE01) a leader from China explained. For some, social responsibility was cast in terms of national economic growth beyond the private interest of the company under their leadership. Such national commitment was most apparent among the Chinese informants we interviewed. For others, global responsibility stood well beyond national borders. Among these informants, the purpose of a global leader's work is to solve global issues and advance global economic development. Leaders, one participant explained, should commit to resolution of issues on the basis of humanity, rather than taking position of their respective nationalities" (ISE04). They defined global leaders as visibly focused on issues of global significance, from peace to social welfare to environmental protection.

These informants refer to "the inability to rise above domestic politics and missing the big picture" (ISE01) or "a focus on narrower issues, losing sight of their passion for key global issues, losing sight of the bigger picture" (USE05) or having a "self-serving attitude focused on 'myself, my family, my country,' and missing the larger picture" (ISE04) as the greatest challenges confronted by global leaders today. For them, global leadership ultimately entails a responsibility to take action in the face of human suffering: Becoming a global leader, one individual from India explained, involves realizing that "there is a gaping world and that you can make a difference, witnessing inequality, hunger, poverty, injustice, and saying 'Enough!'" (ISE01).

How do leaders balance their attention to the bottom line and their inclination to engage broader global issues? Perhaps central to a discussion of responsibility in contemporary global leadership is consideration of the notion of the collective good in the fabric of leaders' work and vision. Nowhere was such a perspective more aptly phrased than when one of our expert reviewers commented that our initial findings make a case for the centrality of a broader notion of collective good in business. He claimed:

*I am okay with people becoming famous. I am okay with people becoming rich. But to be [an] interesting model, [a global leader needs] to emulate [the idea] that what is important is that what they take away from the fruit of their labor is a very small portion of the benefit to humanity that they create. This is an important, necessary condition for being a world-class leader.*

Perhaps not surprisingly, leaders often positioned their work and their commitment to the common good in a historical context—e.g., the history of their civilizations and recent national growth, the history of their country as a global model for peaceful resistance, the history of the struggle for human rights, or the history of the industry in which they worked, now taking a global turn. Such narratives seemed to give meaning to leaders' actions and serve as foundations for their proposed visions. Most leaders across our sample addressed the importance of investigating the world and envisioning a future, maximizing human development, growth, and innovation, and mobilizing people across cultures. Under closer scrutiny, however, some leaders, including those with a social entrepreneurial bent, viewed these qualities against the backdrop of a greater sense of purpose—that of becoming stewards of the world, able to deploy their professional expertise not merely to benefit those in their immediate circles, but primarily to create “public value” in global times.

This developing need for and interest in global responsibility in business is evident both in informants' responses and also the research review of global business ethics. However, as noted earlier, this emphasis on global responsibility requires further examination given the frequency with which high-profile ethical scandals emerge around the world, and suggests that as the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the international business community needs new ways of understanding ethics and defining social responsibility. In pursuit of this understanding and definition, there is a growing body of knowledge on culturally distinct understandings of ethics and social responsibility. For example, as Henri-Claude de Bettignies and Nandani Lynton, professors at China Europe International Business School, pointed out, “[T]raditional Chinese views of integrity are based on a high standard of sincerity and trust between individuals who are friends; it does not apply to people beyond one's close circle of contacts.”<sup>41</sup> They suggest that this traditional view of integrity and the importance that Chinese culture places on personal relationships and networks makes it difficult to translate similar commitments of integrity or sentiments of responsibility to strangers or to broader society as a whole.<sup>42</sup> This culturally specific interpretation of integrity as based upon close personal relationships indicates that similar connections and inferences could be made between distinct understandings of social responsibility and ethics in India and the role of family and collectivism in Indian culture. Scholars studying professional ethics in Asia have found that even prominent ethicists in Asia base their

“...our sense of moral compassion toward all the other 7 billion global inhabitants of this planet will continue to expand.... Technology will eliminate distance.... In the next few decades, we will increasingly realize that our village is a world and not that our world is a village.”

– Kishore Mahbubani,  
The Great Convergence

studies within Western rather than Eastern philosophies.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps many of these so-called “ethical lapses” in Asia could be more properly understood if global ethical philosophies, which blend Eastern and Western models, were developed. “However, the study of cross-cultural differences in ethical leadership is fairly new and requires further research to more properly understand how culturally specific conceptions of ethics shape business and leadership practices and understandings of global responsibility.”<sup>44</sup>

Another factor that provided context to the responses and our research around the growing interest in global responsibility and the reality of ethical lapses in our target countries is the documented challenges in implementing ethical training and creating ethically oriented organizational systems. The scholarly study of ethical leadership is relatively new, emerging more recently as high-profile ethical failures generated interest in the topic and caused organizations and business schools to examine how to best train ethical leaders. In fact, in 2009, just 40% of business schools in China offered ethics courses.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in the US, a focus on ethics has only recently emerged in MBA programs in the wake of dramatic corporate scandals, with the number of ethics courses increasing from 34% in 2001—before the Enron collapse—to 79% in 2011.”<sup>46</sup> However, despite the increasing number of ethics courses, business schools continue to struggle with moving beyond words to action and are just beginning to shift their focus from what it means to be an ethical individual to the mechanisms through which a leader can make ethics part of their organizational culture.<sup>47,48</sup> Such models are still being developed and studied.

In analyzing information from both our respondents and a review of the literature, the notion of global responsibility and a sense of global ethics seems to be in a formative stage. We heard from our informants the strains of an increasing acknowledgement and understanding that leadership encompasses a much greater purpose than simply “doing well” and a nascent embrace of shared global responsibility. It is early to tell how deeply this is felt across the spectrum, and we suggest this as an area for further research.



## IV. IMPLICATIONS

Global leadership, our study reveals, is a nuanced concept, requiring a layering of understanding and reflection on experiences. The dispositional view of global leadership advanced in this paper highlights the learned and learnable quality of leadership capacities. Without exception, our informants reflected on their learning experiences, growth, and development. Given this emphasis on a requisite combination of learning and reflection, we derive a set of practical implications for the promotion of global leadership and the three foundational dispositions it embodies: (1) to investigate the world to envision a better future; (2) to understand and mobilize people across cultures; and (3) to maximize human potential and innovation.

**Five implications can be derived from our exploratory study:**

### (1) Help future leaders create a global vision that encourages responsibility to the world:

The intentionality with which a company defines its work as being global, not just in scope but in responsibility and action, supports how people develop and act, from talent management to policies and processes.

### (2) Develop an organizational culture that encourages the dispositions of global leadership:

We know that dispositions are learned through acculturation more than they are acquired through direct transmission. To nurture a disposition toward global leadership, aspiring leaders must immerse themselves in global environments in which such dispositions thrive. Whether locally or abroad, it is important to create environments where people are able to live these qualities and feel they are continually cultivated. These environments will encourage sharing of perspectives, collaborative global work groups, varied language capacity, and global events to further a culture that shapes an individual's dispositions and their ability to recognize opportunities to exercise global leadership.

### (3) Engage in authentic professional development:

Authentic training and development on cultivating dispositions of global leadership are an opportunity to shape emerging leaders. Our informants continually referenced their personal experiences and time spent growing up, being educated, or working in other cultures and contexts. Global experiences alone are not enough to develop global leadership dispositions; opportunities to reflect on global experiences authentically and discuss challenges and opportunities are important. Experiences and guided reflection provide space and perspective to consider not only

competencies, but also the potential to consider identity, cultural inclinations, and openness to opportunities. Furthermore, there are many leaders operating in a global, diverse environment without physically moving. It is necessary to engage the discussion broadly through case studies, global problem scenarios, and personal plans with support and feedback.

#### (4) Consider ways to include global leadership dispositions in performance management:

Many of our informants emphasized the importance of global leaders' focusing on developing their own and others' leadership capabilities. One way to support this growth, which is recommended throughout much of the management education literature, is to tie the development and exhibition of dispositions to performance management and support systems. Such a connection is an opportunity to emphasize and reflect upon their importance. Linking the three key leadership dispositions—investigate the world to envision a better future, understand and mobilize people across cultures, and maximize human potential and innovation—to existing performance management through the exhibition of specific tasks, reflections, or goals is another way to encourage their development.

#### (5) Develop partnerships with the community:

The opportunity to encourage global learning among students before they even enter a company as employees is a way to strengthen internal learning, build a pipeline for future development, and allow corporate social responsibility opportunities to resonate with overall vision and values. Many of our experienced global leaders reflected on the life-changing experience provided by education abroad, which brought them into contact with new cultures for the first time. Education by study abroad is not feasible for most, and difficult to do on a large scale. However, there is much that can be done to support global leadership without exporting students. Working with universities and K–12 systems to support the development of a global mindset, world languages, global work teams, 21st century skills like critical thinking and collaboration learned and applied with global contexts—along with industry-specific knowledge sets important to your company—is a key opportunity for global leadership development.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study here described sheds empirical and conceptual light on the nature of global leadership as experienced by established business leaders in the US, China, and India. Our analysis yields three main contributions to the growing field of global leadership studies.

First, we advance a dispositional framework of global leadership that is rooted in the experiences of global leaders in the business world. We propose that global leadership is the **disposition to mobilize others to understand matters of local and global significance and act to seize opportunities and improve conditions. Three foundational dispositions are core to global leadership as here defined:** (1) to investigate the world to envision a better future, (2) to understand and mobilize people across cultures, and (3) to maximize human development, growth, and innovation. Individuals are seen as not only holding the skill or ability to lead, but also being sensitive to opportunities to exercise such leadership and being inclined to doing so over time.

Second, we show that while characterizations of global leadership tend to exhibit common features across our sample, under closer scrutiny, distinct emphasis and meanings can be associated with broad cultural orientations. We demonstrate that cultural, historical, political, and personal forces often frame individuals' experience of leadership, from the ways in which they interpret cultural perspective-taking, to the purpose they assign, to their roles and labor. Of notice here is how cultural and domain influences shape the very purpose of global leadership: to meet shareholders' and stakeholders' expectations or to ensure a contribution to the well-being of global societies. Interestingly, the leaders we interviewed expressed forms of hybrid cultural experiences, work environments, and identities, consistently enabling us to highlight the recognition and management of multiple cultural influences as a central quality of successful global leadership. We emphasize hybridity as a lens through which to interpret the experience of global leaders in their rich complexity.

Third, a final and key contribution we see emerging across our data is the emphasis on global leaders as individuals who are able to connect their individual and their firm's goals to those of the larger global community. Many of our informants expressed their belief that true global leaders feel accountable for shaping our shared global future. This emerging emphasis on global responsibility as a key quality of global leadership will be explored further in our continued research.

The key leadership dispositions highlighted in this paper provide a window into how global leaders have leveraged the opportunities of a diverse and interconnected world to generate great success. As we look at the rapidly shifting global landscape in which leaders operate today, the possibilities exist for many others to develop these mindsets, skills, and dispositions—to seize opportunities, create value, and improve conditions.

## APPENDIX A: GLOBAL LEADERS INTERVIEWED

Name	Position
<b>Ronald Arculli</b>	Managing Partner, King & Wood
<b>Hari Bhartia</b>	Co-Chairman and Managing Director, Jubilant Life Sciences
<b>Frank Brown</b>	Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer, General Atlantic  Former Dean, INSEAD
<b>Ronnie Chan</b>	Chairman, Hang Lung Group Limited
<b>Raymond Ch'ien</b>	Director, The Wharf Ltd.  Director, HSBC
<b>Vishakha Desai</b>	President Emerita, Asia Society
<b>Bill Drayton</b>	Founder & CEO, Ashoka
<b>Omar Ishrak</b>	Chairman & CEO, Medtronic
<b>Naiana Lal Kidwai</b>	Group General Manager and Country Head, HSBC India
<b>Anand Mahindra</b>	Managing Director, Mahindra & Mahindra
<b>Jim Rogers</b>	Chairman, President, and CEO, Duke Energy
<b>Xiao-Ming ZHU</b>	Executive President, CEIBS

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