

# CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY A GLOBAL CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

*Nigel Hall*

Churchill said “the future is unknowable but the past should give us hope”. It is time to garner this hope. Science and new technologies provide unfathomable opportunities. We have extraordinary collective experience and human ingenuity to call upon.

Yet right now we are not cutting it. We need to bring on new cultures of leadership that are fit for the 21st century. We have to join the dots more effectively. We must equip our next generation leaders with new mindsets, cross-disciplines’ experience, and skills. Were he with us today, Churchill would no doubt agree that we need a ‘revolution of leadership’.

We have not yet – at least – reached a Napoleon or Hitler extremis level moment, and therefore many do not recognise the urgency of the situation. We are witnessing a synchronous crisis of leadership across our societies and economy, and at national, regional, and global levels. The global institutions are unravelling. We should take note when seasoned diplomats Sir Christopher Meyer and Sir Jeremy Greenstock warn we are at the most worrying time they can recall, and that only unprecedented subordination of national interests to the wider common good will prevent a descent to a violent shattering of a long period of (global) ‘peace’.

Too many of us are ‘looking the other way’. Most political leaders are clinging on to ‘business as usual’ and willfully failing to join the dots or dare to think the ‘unthinkable’. Both the Pope and the President of the United States recently issued stark alerts and calls to action over the threat to the planet and human race posed by climate change. Lord Sacks warns of a world ‘awash’ with hate’ and that ‘religious’ violence and extremism will continue to grow until we devote more effort and resources to the propagation of respect and tolerance for others than those spreading hatred and violent extremism.

Our leaders have failed to lead – to mobilise opinion and inspire us to come together and support urgent practical campaigns. The protection of our environment, making significant progress in the Middle East, reducing mass migration and social inequality ‘really big’ level issues demand a change of leadership model. Churchill-style top-down has largely gone. New style leadership is as much about ‘followship’. We are almost all ‘leaders’ now and 21st century good global citizenship is a key aspect of the better leadership debate.

The Churchill 21st Century Global Leadership Programme, established this year as a 'forward legacy' to Churchill - 50 years after his death and 75 years after he became prime minister in 1940 – is a growing informal alliance of world class organisations and experts that has produced seventeen reports for global leaders. These reports do not, of course, have all the answers, but they ask some of the right questions. They can help kick-start the debate and 'join the dots' for much improved more inclusive 21st century leadership.

The reports are also targeted at policy makers and global citizens. They are downloadable and free to all (Churchill 21st Century Leadership Reports at: [www.churchillcentral.com/News/Churchill-2015/Global-Leadership-Programme-Panel-Reports.html](http://www.churchillcentral.com/News/Churchill-2015/Global-Leadership-Programme-Panel-Reports.html)). They divide into 4 areas: geopolitics and public service, business and finance, the sciences, and society, faith and religion. Of particular note, is the inter-disciplinary and inter-generational effort that underpins the whole programme. 'Next generation leadership' is a unifying core theme and student and generation Y engagement have been high priorities across most panels.

There is no substitute for reading the reports and coming to one's own conclusions and priorities. Standby to be uplifted and energised by some fresh informed thinking. For me, here are just ten of many more points or reflections that merit follow-up thinking and action.

Some scientists say that today's challenges are as great – albeit different - as those Churchill faced. Climate change, population growth et al represent a 'perfect storm'.

The pace and scale of change across the environment, science, technology, and society is unprecedented and outpacing human willingness to adapt.

The West must recover its values and strategic mojo and re-build credible forces matched with credible resolve. Culture and soft power are huge assets.

Our democracy is stuck in a bygone age. It needs a radical reboot if it is to regain trust. A fair and just economy lies at the heart of a sustainable democracy and healthy society.

The disruptive effect of big data and information in this century will dwarf the impact of the industrial revolution. Leaders must be digitally savvy and be prepared for much more technological disruption.

Unprecedented technological advances, complexity, and inter-connections increase the importance of 'more human' aspects of leadership. 'Trust, legitimacy, authenticity' will increasingly define good leaders.

Religion has been badly understood by political elites in the west. It has proved naïve and dangerous to see religion as a barrier to peace and modernity.

Successful leadership will require more listening and ‘tuning in’ and agile context setting. Genuine inter-generational dialogue and 2-way mentoring and learning will characterise great organisations.

By changing our livestock-heavy diets we can dramatically reduce harmful emissions – without waiting for government to tell us.

We have to mainstream the strategic and long-term over the short-term and election-driven issues. The media have a huge role in encouraging good global citizenship and shared ownership and engagement in the big issues of our time.

The Churchill model of leadership is not the blueprint for our more complex and ambiguous times. Yet we can surely do with some famous Churchill vision, courage, team-building, and support for new technologies as we search for better leadership to take us forward. By such means we will, in Churchill’s words, ‘make this muddled world a better place’.

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