The Age of Pluralism: Global Intelligence for Emerging Leaders

We are living in an extraordinary age in which pluralism has become a major part of our lives, and is set to become an even greater force for change and human development in the decades to come.

Under the impact of technological advances, super connectivity, mobility of talent, changing migration patterns, and the sheer diversity of our global knowledge and experiences, the peoples of the world have become more plural than ever before in human history.

Pluralism means that our backgrounds—especially those of our young people—are far more heterogeneous than might have been expected from previous categorisations by nationality, culture, race or religion.

This is not simply multiculturalism as defined by the ‘identity and values’ versus ‘globalisation and elites’ movements of our times.

Pluralism is not a movement. It is a fact of life—and it is the future.

As people travel more from their home of origin, intermarry more, study in more regions of their own country or in foreign countries, work in
more far-flung international and virtual teams, connect with other cultures and cities, and experiment with lifestyles and viewpoints they would never have attempted before, they are coming to regard their ability to be plural or hybrid as a thrilling adventure, a lifetime's calling.

However, there are counter-currents and obstacles along the way. Every revolution produces a counter-revolution. According to many commentators and politicians, this is what we are experiencing now.

**POPULISM OR PLURALISM?**

We are living in an era of populism—at least in the politics of the West. There is no shortage of tub-thumpers and demagogues warning us of the dangers of globalisation, of the people and communities that have been left behind, of the threats of multiculturalism and unchecked immigration to fragmenting societies.

The emphasis of populism and nativism is on barriers, not bridges; on protecting national identity and values; on defending the monoculture from immigrant invasion.

Populists move quickly from inciting fears over cultural disintegration to complaining bitterly about diversity and liberalism, as if these drivers of world progress could somehow be put back into the bottle.

**But in fact the genie has long escaped from the bottle.**

The old assumptions about ‘pure’ monocultures are fast becoming defunct. Not only is it impossible to consider people as simply representatives of their culture, the once governing cultures are themselves becoming fragmented, kaleidoscopic, intermingled and thrillingly complex.

The hectic pace of technological change is driving this diversity. Soon there will be four billion Internet users in the world, and more of them will be speaking Chinese than English.

It’s the same story in the United States, with the number of Spanish speakers (and voters) rapidly growing. Spanish is the second most dominant language in the country after English.
Spanish is spoken by almost 50 million people, and census data suggest that by 2060 the Latino population – the group most likely to speak Spanish – will grow some 115 per sent to 119 million.

The Hispanic population in the United States is already the fifth largest in the world. There are similarly diverse populations in Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, to name just a few countries. Indeed, defining a country by a single culture or even a predominant culture is fast becoming obsolete.

The supposedly monolithic India has more than 100 spoken languages and more than 200 mother tongues. Indonesia, with the world’s fourth largest population, has more than 700 different languages.

**THE WORLD IS BECOMING MORE DIVERSE**

However, it’s not only racial and linguistic diversity that is a fact of life. It’s the diversity of generations, genders, ethnicities, cultures, educational levels, and above all generations, in our interconnected societies and businesses.
Senior executives and CEOs at multinational companies are increasingly diverse, and they come from backgrounds that are neither exclusively white nor exclusively male.

Similarly, the experience of millennials and of generation X is almost entirely hybrid, made up of crosscutting cultural dynamics that have influenced them ever since they were born.

These dynamics fuel a much greater need to be involved in the world and make a global impact than ever before.

Such are the visions driving the emerging leaders of the future, the high potentials who are seeking to gain more influence in their organisations and who are ready to step up to assume greater responsibility as the traditional concept of the hierarchical organisation breaks down.

Many are being relocated or are already living and working in the dynamic emerging economies, such as those of Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East.
These emerging leaders are increasingly well travelled, knowledge- and information-rich, high tech and social media savvy, used to disruptive innovations, cosmopolitan in tastes and outlook, and able to thrive in new cultural situations.

CLOSING THE LEADERSHIP GAP

But there is one area of the modern world where they are still lacking—leadership. In order to truly flourish as leaders of the future, these younger generation entrepreneurs and executives need more than an ability to succeed in new environments.

To be strong and responsive leaders of diverse teams, cultural agility is no longer enough. Leaders must also identify their inner weaknesses and ignite their inner strengths.

They must leverage personal as well as cultural differences to gain trust and build collaborative relationships in their home workplace, across borders and globally.

In order to influence character, they must know their own character. All the more surprising, therefore, that so little is being done to develop these traits.
According to the Global Leadership Forecast, a survey of a thousand C-level executives worldwide\(^1\), only 14 per cent of CEOs believe they have the leadership talent to execute their upcoming strategy.

Among the Top Ten challenges listed, 64 per cent of C-Level executives identified the development of Next Generation leaders, 60 per cent indicated a failure to attract or retain top talent, and 48 per cent pointed to new global competitors.

A stunning 78 per cent of Human Resources professionals considered their organization’s leadership planning systems to be only moderately effective or worse.

So at a time when organizations need more leaders—caused by the single largest departure of leaders in modern history—organizations are facing a shortfall in planning and leadership experience.

**EMERGING LEADERS NEED COACHING**

Recent research shows that only 52 per cent of millennials feel prepared to take on their new roles.

Given that frontline leaders play such a crucial part in the near-term implementation and execution of business strategy. These gaps can only have serious negative impacts on long-term growth. Millennials aged 18-34 are estimated to number some 78 million in America alone.

The global population of emerging leaders is exponentially greater, and is now ready to reshape the world’s economy. So what is being done to equip them?

Many organizations use executive coaching to address leadership challenges. Executive coaching is a $1.5 billion per year industry, with most of the biggest enterprises now using coaches.

The numbers continue to increase. Industry surveys suggest there are 25,000 + business coaches in Europe, which comprises about 40 per cent of all business coaches in the world (estimated at 150,000+). 

---

\(^1\) 2018. Published by Development Dimensions International and the
However, while executive coaching is top-of-mind for executives and Human Resources, further research shows that only 35 per cent of global organizations used executive coaching for their emerging leaders\(^2\).

By contrast, 48 per cent of the organizations use executive coaching for VP level and senior executives, while 65 per cent of the organizations surveyed do not consider executive coaching an important developmental strategy for their high-potential pipeline.

This shortfall represents a significant opportunity for organizations and coaches—especially in light of what different generations expect from their employers.

In many studies, Generation X employees reveal they want a casual, independent, flexible environment, and a place to learn; Generation Y employees want a structured, supportive, and interactive environment.

Both want continuous growth and ‘connectedness’ with people—including people they interact with throughout the world.

In the following chapters, I offer a clear and actionable process to help create stronger leaders for today’s multi-dimensional and multi-polar business world. My intention is to speak personally and directly from my own

\(^2\) Trends in Executive Development Research Study (Pearson)
experiences and those of my clients, colleagues, and partners in many different work and life situations around the world.

In Part One, I guide you through the challenges to global leadership presented by populist, nativist and tribalist movements in many countries. I also look at the false dichotomy between diversity and opposition to immigration.

In Part Two, I provide three specific tools for global leadership: the Bamboo Strong™ CQ Model for developing cultural intelligence; the Intercultural DISC™ assessment for leveraging personal and cultural differences; and Intelligent Leadership™, an immersive leadership development experience founded by world-leading executive coach John Mattone.

In Part Three, I explore the importance of ‘connectedness’ and moving beyond diversity into the future – one that is already upon us and all around us.

Throughout this book, I offer unique solutions for developing current and emerging global leaders while showing you the skill sets and coaching solutions you need to collaborate with people of different personalities, gender, backgrounds, generations and cultures. To this end, in the Postscript I include a number of action steps, bootcamps, resources and checklists to create your own strategy for becoming Intelligent Global Leaders.

Please let me know about your global leadership experiences. You can connect with me by registering for the Age of Pluralism Planner and by joining my email subscriber list.

You can also reach out to me on social media and read about my global leadership strategies at http://www.davidcliveprice.com.

To your global leadership success!

Dr David Clive Price
Intelligent Leadership Master Coach
Author of Bamboo Strong