

## **ACUNS Seminar on Leadership (7 November 2020)**

On 7 November 2020, ACUNS Tokyo Liaison Office organized the online seminar with the theme *International Leadership in the 21st Century: Themes, Contexts, and Critiques*, in partnership with the Human Security Program of the University of Tokyo and the International Christian University. The seminar was opened with remarks from Professor Sukehiro Hasegawa, Head of the ACUNS Tokyo Liaison Office. Professor Hasegawa hopes that the seminar can be the first of many events that will facilitate the sharing of views and the understanding of regional and global issues among academics and practitioners. Professor Shoichiro Iwakiri, President of the International Christian University, followed with his remarks, expressing optimism that the symposium can provide a venue to understand leadership in current international circumstances. Likewise, Professor Mitsugi Endo, Chair of the Human Security Program at the University of Tokyo, spoke about the increasingly important role that good leadership plays in the contemporary world. Professor Herman Salton, then, proceeded by introducing the Seminar's first panel on International Leadership.

### *Panel on International Leadership*

Professor Varuni Ganepola's presentation, entitled "Why Leadership Matters: Exploring Psychological Aspects of Leadership" spoke about leadership from a psychological perspective. She emphasized the concept of group leadership, trying to answer the question of "whether leadership actually matters." She talked about the foremost theories in leadership studies, such as great man theories, trait or character theories, situational theories the importance of context and contingency, theories on how leadership has evolved, and behavioral theories or the match between the person and social and group identity. More recently, scholars have concentrated on relationship theories that focus on interactionist, transactional, and transformational leadership. These theories find four variables that are key to understanding the concept of leadership: the leader, the followers, the task, and the context/situation. Leadership, according to Prof. Ganepola, can be *learned*, moving away from the conception that leaders are *born*. This approach implies that to gain acceptance and credibility, leaders must position themselves among the group rather than above it. Contemporary psychology of leadership suggests understanding the dynamics and social psychology aspects of the group. Good leadership, then, is not about applying universal rules of behavior, but looking at, and understanding, the needs of the group. Leadership matters because it gives strategy and direction, provides stability, and encourages cooperation, through leadership policies founded on justice, ethics, and equality. In essence, leadership succeeds when the person pays equal attention to group task, or getting things done, and to maintaining socio-emotional relationship with the group. Prof. Ganepola's presentation concluded by quoting Nelson Mandela: "the greatest glory of living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time you fall."

Professor Sukehiro Hasegawa's presentation, entitled "Critique of Kantian Leadership for the Contemporary World," began with a brief explanation of Kant's categorical imperatives theory. Immanuel Kant's thesis argues that a leader must meet categorical imperatives and requires leaders to apply principles in their behaviors. Leaders must be fair not only to the group where he

belongs but also to those outside it. With his experience as part of UN peace missions in Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, and Timor-Leste, Prof. Hasegawa identified one unrelenting question asked by leaders in such environments: What is the right thing to do? He referred to a book by former US President John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*, to understand the role that courage plays in “doing the right thing” as a leader. More than acting decisively and forcefully, as peace missions may have done sometimes, courage implies freeing yourself from prejudice, personal desire, and preference for a certain group, in exchange for the entire nation’s welfare and unity amidst challenges from slavery and war. Such understanding of courage is related to Kant’s concept of a third kind of freedom. Beyond freedom from want and fear, freedom from ego and personal inclinations is an important aspect of leadership and doing the right thing. In Eastern philosophy, Buddhists refer to these desires to accumulate money, wealth, and power as *bonno*. One’s freedom from these desires manifests in the courage to do what is right. Kant’s thesis also resonates in Sun Tzu’s statement: “if you know your enemy (partner) and know yourself, you can win a hundred battles (peace) without any loss.” Knowing one’s self and knowing others are both important in leadership. Doing the right thing in international leadership, for instance, means rising above the principle of your society, doing what is right for all peoples of the world as mentioned in the UN Charter. Prof. Hasegawa concluded by stating that “to address this pandemic, climate change, and other global challenges in the rapidly changing contemporary world, international leaders must rise above conventional thinking values and principles we have acquired over centuries.”

Finally, Professor Sangita Rayamajhi’s presentation on “Gender, Differences, and Leadership: An Individual Assessment,” talked about leadership variations from a gender perspective. She begins by discussing male dominance in the history of leadership and the underrepresentation of women in organizational settings (military, business, and politics). She posed the following questions to the audience: Are men natural leaders? If so, why not women? What is the difference? According to Prof. Rayamajhi, there are certain traits of leadership that are attributable to both men and women. There is gender stereotyping even in leadership forcing women to have to prove competence in leadership. A “double bind” exists wherein if women exhibit leadership qualities typically attributed to men, she is often dismissed as being too competitive, very dominating, and arrogant, whereas these traits would be considered attractive, and even “sexy” when used to describe male leaders. This critical scrutiny of female leaders tends to have an adverse impact on the woman’s personality and image. Furthermore, there are obstacles and distractions for women leaders such as religious faith and sociocultural beliefs, reproductive roles, sexism in the workplace, lack of support networks, and gender gaps in employment, education, evaluation, resulting in incongruous stereotypes associated with women in leadership. For female leaders to overcome these obstacles, they have had to combine competence and warmth; exhibit participative and transformational engagement with their groups; create social capital by joining networks, finding mentors, and developing relationships with colleagues within and outside her organization; show appreciation and recognize others; and promote work ethics.

Prof. Rayamajhi concludes by stating that there must be a transformation of perceptions about women’s capabilities as a leader by abandoning the view that women have a different leadership agenda and modality from men, and the social assumptions that describe men as more capable than women as leaders. Furthermore, she states that these differences in perceptions between

male and female leaders are all in our minds, and propagated by misogyny, conditioning and biases. Indeed, women have always exercised leadership in families and communities. Assumptions about leadership have started to change from hierarchical, command-and-control models towards those that are more participatory and transformational.

After the last presentation, the panelists responded to questions from seminar participants. According to Prof. Ganepola, the question “what is the most important characteristic of a good leader?” is probably the hardest question to answer in leadership literature. As there is no recipe for good leadership, she suggests that certain traits fit certain situations. There is not one set of traits or personality characteristic that fits every single situation. Apart from being situational, it is also contingent upon group identity and dynamics, as well as the task or challenge at hand. She further talks about five personality dimensions or domains: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. This model, she suggests, helps in understanding leaders’ personality traits, but reiterates that it is not possible to generalize certain traits as “good leadership” characteristics. Next, Prof. Hasegawa responded to a personal anecdote related to the lack of leadership and conscientiousness in peace missions, and its negative impact particularly on local peace mission personnel. He recalls a similar experience in assignments in Somalia and Rwanda. He believes that mission leaders must equally care for the security of both local and international staff. More than conscientiousness, he suggests, mission leaders must be professional, knowledgeable of rules, laws, and operational modalities, and must be aware of the mindset of local people. Prof. Hasegawa, then, responded to a question on what he believes to be the kind of world government the international community needs. He suggests that the international community must apply the rule of law and returns to his explanation on the relevance of Kant’s thesis. He states that the importance of Kant’s thesis is reflected in the application of the rule of law in the international community’s responses to global challenges. Finally, Prof. Rayamajhi responded to a question related to the rise of sexual assault and other crimes in Nepal during the time of COVID-19 lockdowns. She relates the escalation of such crimes to an enduring oppressive masculinity, not only against women, but also those that may be victimized due to their potential inferiority and vulnerability. She then addresses a question on gender parity in leadership. She states that the problem does not manifest only in the disparity in numbers of men and women in leadership positions in organizations. She recalls and relates her experience of being sidelined and dismissed in the academe, wherein majority of his colleagues are male. She suggests that women leaders must insist on being heard. Finally, a participant asks Prof. Rayamajhi about how good leadership can help transform institutions in developing countries like Nepal. She states that leaders must not have any vested interests in their role of addressing crises such as the current pandemic. Transformation, she suggests, must come from within the leadership for any changes to institutions to happen. After addressing these questions from participants, Prof. Salton raised the issue of bad leadership and abhorrent principles that manifest in some leaders’ governance strategies. In response, the panelists agreed that in such cases, bad leaders must be exposed and talked about, values and ethics must be universally upheld, and defend democracy and the rule of law against corrupt and immoral governance.

*Panel on Leadership in Selected Area*

Doctor Suze Wilson's presentation, entitled "Lessons from New Zealand's Leadership of the Pandemic," started with an overview of New Zealand's pandemic experience. Although the country's epidemiological curve had a steep growth in March, the number of cases quickly dropped after the government imposed a strict lockdown and adopted the strategy of eliminating community transmission. New Zealand, therefore, had relative freedom of movement and freedom from COVID-19 since April. While an array of factors can influence how a government deals with the pandemic, New Zealand has shown that it managed the COVID-19 experience well compared to the other island nations such as Japan, and Ireland, while Taiwan's response was outstandingly successful. Doctor Wilson then highlighted the notable features of New Zealand's response to the pandemic that others could draw lessons from. First, the government prioritized a strategic health response in which the containment of the virus was done first to better position the country economically. For example, the government delivered necessary provisions during the lockdown and set a post-lockdown platform for economic rebound. Although health and the economy are connected, oscillating between a health response and economic response, such as in the UK, is not an effective strategy. Second, the government has been willing to listen and be led by science, to report openly, and show receptiveness to the public, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of government recommendations. Third, the government conducted daily press conferences to inform the public, ultimately building public trust. This form of communication has also become a medium to push for inclusive action that would help people cope with the pandemic, such as wage subsidies and education television for children. Doctor Wilson concluded her presentation by emphasizing that the actions of the government have been in line with helping people cope emotionally and fostering a greater sense of trust.

Raymond Andaya summarized the questions for the panelists. In response to the interconnected questions about the necessary steps to address a divided world and make the UN's role more relevant, Professor Gilmore called for a reframing of these questions beyond the pandemic context and the Global North experience. Several countries have long been experiencing life-shattering poverty and dignity erosion. Meanwhile, the UN is weakened, too silent, and unwilling to stand up for human rights, as set in its Charter, because of its preoccupation with managerialism. Professor Howard, in response to the future of peacekeeping and the current divisions, added that UN peacekeepers need a certain amount of detachment from the UN Security Council and UN headquarters in order to innovate and transform. In response to further questions on the theme of power in peacekeeping, Professor Howard noted that most missions recognize the collective common interest for peacekeeping over national interest. However, issues regarding accountability remain, especially in the absence of strong institutional legal forms. Finally, Professor Howard noted that white supremacy and extremism is an issue that deserves greater attention. She stressed the importance of re-focusing the attention toward understanding the underlying conditions for why people would subscribe to extremism and how this could be changed. Responding to the question on how to rebuild trust in leadership, how to put an end to bad leadership, and whether the New Zealand experience can be transferred elsewhere, Professor Wilson emphasized the need to overcome the idea that "leadership is the heroic act of an individual." Instead, leadership is relational in which people engage through a transparent dialogue, thereby building trust. It is, therefore, imperative to select or vote for leaders with relations skills over those who use their leadership positions for their advancement instead of serving others, the latter intensifying solving rather than solving them.

Professor Ai Kihara-Hunt noted the following views about leadership common throughout the panelists' presentations—one that is based on the interest of common humanity instead of division, relational to foster trust rather than managerialism, and is willing to confront

unacceptable values. She then invited the panelists to respond to further questions and give their concluding remarks. In response to the question about the political impetus for radical change in the UN, Professor Gilmore briefly laid out three urgent actions. First is for the UN to call out the truth about governmental and transnational dynamics. Secondly, in addition to its humanitarian responses, the UN should also call for justice and accountability in order to re-affirm the Charter's principle of protecting human rights unequivocally for all. Finally, the UN should create freer spaces for dialogue between governments and civil society to encourage "a multiplicity of voices and a diversity of leadership and a capacity to express that through common values." In response to the question on inter-civilizational dialogue, Professor Howard noted that both Catholic and Muslim leaders have employed the government to reign in greater understanding of freedom. However, Emmanuel Macron stands on the position that it is intolerable to restrict the right of expression, aiming his comments at a domestic audience to unite France but, inadvertently, offending the Muslim community. The problem lies in intolerance. Lastly, In her concluding remarks, Professor Wilson shared an observation that people are usually drawn into false prophets offering "simple answers to very complex problems." Therefore, "questioning over authority" and "asking challenging questions to raise the uncomfortable truth" through open dialogue are pivotal for those concerned with fostering good leadership.

In her capacity as the ACUNS Chair, Professor Howard delivered the concluding remarks by first acknowledging the seminar organizers and other ACUNS members. She gave a brief overview of ACUNS and its core activities, including the Annual Meeting in June 2021, the *Global Governance* journal, annual workshops for young professionals, and liaison offices. She concluded with the call for strong multilateral institutions and more platforms, such as this seminar, that provide civil society engagement in leadership.

Report by Dahlia Simangan, Raymond Andaya, Elizabeth Gamarra and Arbenita Sopaj