

## *Book Review*

### **RONDINELLI, D. A. & HEFFRON, J. M. (2009). LEADERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT: WHAT GLOBALIZATION DEMANDS OF LEADERS FIGHTING FOR CHANGE. STERLING, VA: KUMARIAN PRESS.**

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Leadership for Development clearly establishes the importance of deepening our understanding of leadership traits, not simply as an academic exercise, but in the interest of promoting future development. The call for an analysis of successful leadership traits across cultures suggests to the reader that the book might succeed where others have failed by outlining a path forward. However forward focusing the motivation to understand leadership traits, the work fails to pave that path and rather remains a patchwork of portraits of leadership; a sampling of possibilities but not a cohesive guide forward. As such, the book offers a useful platform for piquing the interest of students of development, the general public, and the many questions left unanswered after reading the many cases serving as points of future research.

Using the Pacific Basin as a cultural and political nexus for investigation of how various leadership styles have unfolded at critical junctures in international development, the book undertakes to organize insights on leadership from the past, in order to develop a blueprint for the future. The book begins with a convincing argument regarding the growing pressures that globalization has placed on leaders in every community. The changed nature of communications, transportation, trade, and the way states organize themselves through economic and political treaties has resulted in an increasingly complex system. This system has placed increased demands on leaders in some ways, but more importantly has changed the very nature of those demands. As the author states, there are new actors, accessing new markets, using new tools, and all according to new rules (p.g. 81). Where in times past a leader was called upon to be decisive, directive, and maintain control, today's leaders are called upon to facilitate collaboration and in some settings even to lead through service.

Leadership for Development refocuses our attention by establishing leadership as a complimentary approach to understanding the catalysts of development. Within its essays various leaders who have been politically influential include President John F.

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Kennedy through his changes to foreign aid policy at a time when the United States was perceived poorly by developing nations. Additional political examples range from convincing with Mayor Lerner of Curitiba, Brazil to questionable with Vincente Fox's Mexico. Although both are obviously notable political leaders, less obvious is whether both exhibited the leadership traits that were called for. In fact, some might argue that Fox's Mexico is an example of where the leadership needs were ultimately left unmet.

These portraits of the past add to our understanding of how various leadership styles have played out in critical aspects of international development over the past century. They highlight examples of where desirable leadership traits contributed to successful development, and where strong and situationally appropriate leadership has failed to materialize. The cases offered in this book add strength to the argument that the role of leadership has evolved as the complexity of our world has increased under the pressures of globalization and give weight to the list of desirable leadership attributes which is offered early in the book (p.g. 88). Although this list and the other leadership traits presented do point in a generally positive direction, it is probable that these traits are not innate in every leader with a role in encouraging development. Rather than paving a way forward with concrete understanding of how to best promote appropriate leadership traits, what these cases most poignantly illustrate is how very situational appropriate and effective leadership is. In his summary, Rondinelli asserts that culture is critical and in most cases the answer to the question "which leadership traits are called for in order to encourage development?" is that it depends (pg 267). Although this conclusion leaves little by the way of concrete recommendations for policy makers, it does serve as a compelling platform for future research. This collection of essays and commentaries offers students and academics a brief review of how our understanding of leadership has progressed, makes a strong case for why deepening our understanding of how leadership traits influence development is important, and leaves the reader with important questions regarding how to use leadership as another leverage point to promote development.

This, however, is not simply a failure of these authors or this work. Attempting to consolidate the vastly different leadership traits that may be called upon in specific circumstances and at specific times, into an organized and useful guideline for purposefully fostering appropriate and effective leadership is clearly a feat of enormous proportion. Although much interest has developed around the possibility of guiding leadership, and the leadership, human behaviour, and development studies have made significant advances in recent decades, outlining leadership traits in such a cohesive way is to many a noble impossibility. Whether due to subjectivity, the difficulty in isolating leadership traits for study considering the sheer volume of potential trait combinations, cultural settings, and other outside influences, or a lack of interest as Rondinelli suggests, the body of research needed to move leadership analysis and prescription forward is as of yet lacking. Despite these limitations, what *Leadership for Development* adds most ef-

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fectively to the field of development research is a convincing account of why now more than ever, leadership must be understood and a motivating call for further study.

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**ISSN** 1662-1387