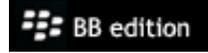


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By Kishore Mahbubani | NEWSPAPER EDITION

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EDITOR'S note:

This is the third and final part of an article adapted from the author's speech at the Shanghai Overseas Returned Scholars Association's (SORSA) Forum on September 9, 2011. SORSA and the Shanghai Alumni Club of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, contributed this article.

WHAT would happen if China decides to lead the world?

I have three suggestions.

My first suggestion is that if China decides to lead the world or serve the world, it should not do so alone. It should do so in partnership with other countries so that other countries do not become frightened of China leading the world.

Let me give you an example. I mentioned earlier that in the Copenhagen Conference when China was under a lot of pressure from the United States and Europe to do more on global warming, China did not fight the rest alone; instead, China cooperated with India.

Because China and India were working together, China was not seen to be unreasonable; it also had the support from other countries at the Copenhagen meeting.

My second suggestion to you is that when China tries to serve the world, it need not have to start from scratch; you do not have to reinvent principles. You can use the established principles.

For example on trade, the established principles of international trade that the United States and Europe used to push, you can now take these principles and support them, because those principles are good ones; those principles created a level playing field for all countries to compete in.

For example, if China wants to give a speech on why free trade is good for the world, you don't have to write the speech yourself, you go back to the 1950s and 1960s, and you will find a beautiful speech by maybe President John F. Kennedy.

My final suggestion is that if you decide to provide global leadership, you should take advantage of a very ancient Chinese virtue because this virtue or value has been very strong in Chinese culture.

That virtue or value is humility.

As you know, Chinese believe it is good to be humble.

So when you provide global leadership, you must do the exact opposite of what the Americans did because the Americans are very arrogant, especially at the end of Cold War in 1990.

The Americans do not value humility. They believe it's good to be proud and speak out. So China can provide a different kind of global leadership. You can show or provide the leadership by being humble and listening to others.

One reason why America had a lot of problems in the last 10 years is that Americans stopped listening to the rest of the world.

But if China provides global leadership and listens, then it will be a much better kind of global leadership for the world.

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