

# Raffarin: Similarities and differences between Chinese, French, and US leadership

Former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who is Distinguished Professor and Charles de Gaulle Chair in Global Leadership at CEIBS visited the school's Shanghai Campus for a series of academic exchanges from July 6-10. As part of the "CEIBS Insights 2018 Master Class" series of lectures, Raffarin analysed and compared Chinese, French, and US leadership from the perspective of a politician and a scholar. Below are excerpts from his speech.

"The history of leadership can be traced back to 1700 BC to the Code of Hammurabi, a solemn, fundamental code of law of Mesopotamia (now Iraq) which states that the powerful must abide by the law and that leaders must be respected.

Historically, a lot of thought has been given to leadership. Confucius proposed many great ideas on state governance in the 5th century BC in China. Also, philosophers such as Cicero diligently studied leadership and people management in ancient Greece.

In modern society, leadership is not just a matter of politics, but also a matter of business management.

In a business context, leaders need to inspire team spirit in order to encourage team members to grow and act. As an aspect of business management, leadership is one of CEIBS' core responsibilities. Many of the professors at CEIBS are engaged in in-depth research on leadership. In addition, the French-based Charles De Gaulle Foundation has entered into a partnership with CEIBS to examine leadership together.





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A cross-cultural comparison will uncover different types of leadership. However, we are not going to draw conclusions about which is better or which is worse; instead, we are going to highlight some of the differences as a way to provide inspiration and encourage improvement.

As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the French writer and author of *The Little Prince*, put it, “Love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking outward in the same direction.” The purpose of cultural comparison is not convergence, but idea sharing. At CEIBS, we can help define leadership by learning about both Chinese and European cultures.

### Five types of leadership

In general, there are five types of leadership, or five ways for leaders to use power.

The first type is autocratic leadership. I’m your leader and you do what I say. This is how the military is run – subordinates act on the orders of their superiors.

The second type is paternal leadership. If you are willing to work with me, I will care for you like a father-figure, providing care and help for you. That is, as a leader, I offer you love and respect, and in return, you work for me.

The third type is democratic leadership. According to this approach, we work together equally and democratically, with work organised in a collective fashion, but still with only one leader.

The fourth type is collective leadership. Here, within the group, there are no leaders, but instead only individuals. The group is led by a team. No one stands in front of, or hides behind, the team.

The fifth type is laissez-faire leadership. In this case, there are no leaders and team members can just do what they want to do.

### The US: Leadership is a game of success with an emphasis on rules and techniques

At American universities there is a

wealth of literature about leadership – for example, on how to get the attention of an audience and quiet a noisy auditorium during public speaking. When stepping up to the podium and greeting an audience, former US President Barack Obama often used the words “Hello, everyone”, instead of just “Hello”, as a way to communicate directly with the audience.

For Americans, leadership starts with learning. Everyone can be a good leader. The US way of thinking is that everything can be organised as long as they learn to work, speak, write, arrange meetings, make decisions, manage, and control things.

In the US, leadership is, in reality, a game of success. Plenty of research has been conducted into this area, especially research centred on Obama. As the first Africa American President of the United States, Obama attained the status of both a winner and a pioneer in leadership.

Obama’s principles of leadership include the following:

(1) Believe you are unique. Uniqueness is not a barrier, but an

advantage. Obama, for instance, was able to use his ancestry as a trump card in order to win the US presidential election.

(2) Credibility. Show you are capable of leading the country and prove to voters that you can do it.

(3) Third, considering that most young Americans prefer to look ahead to the future, as a leader you must constantly express your vision for the future.

In the US, leadership is about creation and reform – two ideas which have often been incorporated into campaign slogans. American leaders are willing to promise changes. They want to grow and improve their leadership in order to help everyone grow together.

Another interpretation of American leadership can be found in *The 48 Laws of Power*, an international best-seller published in the US. Some of the principles mentioned in this book include: never outshine the master,

always conceal your intentions, always say less than is necessary, always pay attention to your enemies, always make yourself indispensable, master the art of timing, and always be unpredictable.

In this way, Americans have established a set of ideas, rules, and practices for leadership.

### France: Leadership is heroism

Throughout French history, many leaders have relied on personal charisma as a means to defining leadership. General Charles de Gaulle, for example, exemplified French leadership through his actions.

Charles de Gaulle believed that leadership is important and that nothing great could ever be achieved without great men. Besides possessing innate talent, leaders have the ability to learn from their experiences.

According to Charles de Gaulle, a leader needs to have the following

qualities:

(1) A leader should be a man of character. He is action-oriented with aspirations and a passion for taking action. He is not willing to just sit on the side-lines. In addition, he cares about decision making – if he becomes a leader, he won't let others make decisions. A leader welcomes challenges – for only by overcoming difficulties can he realise his full potential. Instead of passing the buck to others or to his subordinates, a leader takes responsibility for failures.

(2) Leadership needs to be suited to actual conditions. The environment is essential to the execution of leadership. France is a country full of ideologies where people like to think. However, a leader cannot be limited to one type of thought. He needs to observe the real environment and base the direction of decision-making on that environment.

(3) A leader is aware of his fate and knows clearly if he is a leader or not. A



good leader is enterprising, daring, and non-complacent.

Furthermore, Charles de Gaulle emphasised authority. He believed that silence is where the authority and reputation of leaders lay. He saw the need to be brief when communicating with others. He advised against remaining close to others, since a sense of detachment could help enhance prestige. He also believed moral power is important, as it could prevent one's status and reputation from coming into question.

In his view, being led is a basic need for French people, similar to eating or sleeping. A person becomes a leader not because he imposes leadership on others, but because others want to be led. Great leadership is needed in this kind of scenario.

### China: Leadership is the wisdom to take stock of the situation

The 5th century BC was the

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time of both Confucius and Ancient Greece. At that time, both East Asians and Westerners were interested in the organisation of politics and the distribution of power.

Confucius' primary responsibility was to act as a consultant for rulers. In the process of doing so, he developed a set of ideas about power, which continue to inspire leaders around the world today. For instance, Confucius believed that without integrity one could not be a leader.

Similar to Charles de Gaulle, Confucius advocated the need for rituals. Leaders require rituals in order to make it easier to lead people. A military parade, for example, is a reflection of a culture that governs a particular country. In France, we also award medals to people for various contributions to society. Such rituals are important.

There is a wise saying about power in the Analects of Confucius: “Lack of forbearance in small matters upsets great plans.”

Wisdom is the pursuit of Chinese thought. Laozi, an ancient Chinese philosopher, had many sayings about leadership. In saying that he should “not dare to be ahead in the world”, Laozi meant one should remain neutral. According to Chinese philosopher Han Feizi, “the ruler must not reveal his desires”. Han Feizi also argued that a monarch's real power could not be shared.

When welcoming delegations from most countries, I find that the most important person always walks in front. When welcoming Chinese delegations,

however, I often don't know who the most important person is because he doesn't always walk in front.

In France, leaders are always among the first to rush to the forefront to hold the banner high. In China, however, they often work behind-the-scenes to develop strategies and are responsible for coordinating people in order to get things running.

When it comes to exercising power, Han Feizi believed everything should be done according to laws, which, unlike what we now call laws, were simply a set of rules guiding people's actions based on collective reasoning. According to this approach, leaders execute projects which serve as platforms for communication and the implementation of collective ideas. On such platforms, leaders merely represent sets of rules.

### 12 keywords on leadership

Lastly, I would like to say that anyone can be a leader, whether it is in his family, the workplace, or on a sports team.

Regarding leadership, I have 12 keywords to share with you.

First, there are four major features of leadership: courage, creativity, trust, and emotion. Second, there are four areas in which leadership can be applied: strategy, influence, relationship, and execution. Finally, there are four things which subordinates or teams expect to receive from leaders: respect, belief, stability, and hope.”