When the historian Edward Gibbon expressed curiosity "by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth," his answers included "the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself" and "the intolerant zeal of the Christians." We might suggest a third cause: extraordinary leadership in the cause of the faith.

First was the rise of Christianity out of searing conflict. When early Christians vied with Jews, pagans, and Roman authority, one of the great weapons of their "zeal" was borrowing from the very adversaries they sought to overcome. Christianity grew out of Judaism and, in parting, took a good deal along with it—above all the idea of one God. From the pagans who persecuted them, Christians borrowed the earthly ways and beliefs of country folk and the concepts and methods of philosophers. Thus early Christianity was broadened and deepened by the dynamics of conflict in ways that would steel it against constant challenges in the centuries ahead.

Christianity's triumph in the West was also marked by unparalleled leadership at all levels. In the early centuries, power rested in its far-flung bishops. As local or provincial heads of the Church, bishops were arbiters, administrators, lay judges, as well as builders of cathedrals, basilicas, roads, and fortifications. They presided over arrays of leaders and followers—priests and monks and nuns as well as missionaries, local influentials, and common parishioners. Even when later the bishop of Rome came to be-
Transforming Leadership

stride the Christian world as pope, his fellow bishops served as the crucial linkage between the parishes and the Vatican.

Such leadership would have been unavailing and ephemeral without the potent doctrine that invigorated and empowered it. That creed had many dimensions but it was rooted in the needs of people for ritual and mystery, for moral principles and day-to-day commandments, for earthly hope and final salvation. Most important perhaps was the Christian belief in the equality of all before God. The medieval Church sold indulgences to the rich, but it also ministered to the poor. For St. Augustine, according to historian Peter Brown, each Christian was “equally—and totally—dependent on the grace of God. For him, the doctrine of election was a source of comfort to the humble, and a stern warning to the proud.”

During its first millennium Christianity confronted a rival creed and cause it could not vanquish, Islam. As powerful as the fierce warriors of the *jihad* was the assault on the most sacred of Christian values, Christ’s divinity as the son of God. In the holy Koran, the founders of Islam charged that “Jesus, the son of Mary, was only God’s messenger... It is not for God to take a son.” Their challenge spread through the eastern and southern Mediterranean world before it was contained. In the end, Christian armies and ideas kept their grip on the European heartland, but Islam dominated huge populations and areas across Asia and Africa, and planted a great mosque on top of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, Judaism’s holiest site.

In its second millennium, the rise of Protestantism produced the gravest crisis Christianity had known—a civil war within the faith. The battles, among the most violent and costliest in human history, raged among huge and fanatical armies of believers. Just as Christianity had in its founding days, the Protestant Reformation borrowed heavily in moral values and sacred principles from the brethren it was leaving. These commonalities of faith both gave the Reformation’s attack on Catholic “corruption” added bite and wider appeal and also made possible later moves toward ecumenism. In the twentieth century the fury of secular ideologies—creeds like fascism and communism—overshadowed for a time the old religious conflict. As much as Christianity and Islam, the new creeds were global in scope, and they were murderous beyond any of the wars of religion. Yet they, too, testified to the homicidal power of true believers captured and caged by the values they proclaimed.
WHAT VALUES FOR LEADERS?

Given the ferocity of conflicts in the mid-twentieth century, only arrant optimists might have hoped that some kind of global pact on human rights could be won. Yet in the years after World War II, even as a new "cold war" divided the planet, political leaders fashioned an accord of astonishing boldness and vision, called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This declaration was the culmination of centuries-old aspirations for some kind of world agreement that would not only define and proclaim the universal rights of all human beings but also pursue and enforce such rights. Advocates of the "Rights of Man" had won notable advances from the English Bill of Rights of 1689 to the American Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and the campaigns for the rights of women and racial and ethnic minorities that followed over the next two centuries. Still, these were national or local struggles, not global in scope.

Could the victors of World War II frame a declaration that would speak for all the nations? In 1941, even before the United States entered the war, Franklin D. Roosevelt had proclaimed that the aim of peace should be to secure for all people the Four Freedoms—of speech and religion, from want and fear. This was followed up by the Anglo-American Atlantic Charter. Roosevelt was ever mindful that the war had come on the failure of Woodrow Wilson’s League of Nations to restrain the sweep of fascist aggression not only against states but against political, ethnic, and religious minorities under their domination. Now, as he contemplated the creation of a new international peacekeeping body, FDR might have been struck by his predecessor’s prescient linkage of human rights violations and war. “Nothing,” Wilson had warned at Versailles in 1919, “is more likely to disturb the peace of the world than the treatment which might in certain circumstances be meted out to minorities.” A successor to the League must squarely state not only what it stood against—aggression and war—but also what it stood for. And so, late in 1944, as the Allied armies smashed their way into the Nazi homeland, American delegates to a United Nations organizational conference overcame British and Soviet objections to including the need for human rights in the charter of the United Nations. Later the UN established a Commission on Human Rights, which set to work on a separate universal declaration of rights.
"Universal"—the idea was intoxicating but seemingly utopian. How could a declaration with wide enough scope to include the war’s winners and losers, communist and democratic nations, empires and their colonies, industrialized and developing countries also have teeth sharp enough to bite deeply into attitudes across such a diversity of cultures and conditions? And what did human rights mean? This question led to political and intellectual conflict, but as a starting point, there was considerable agreement, however hazy, that human rights were based in human wants—on those things necessary, in political scientist Jack Donnelly’s words, for a “life of dignity, for a life worthy of a human being, a life that cannot be enjoyed without these rights.”

The obvious problem was the enormous variety of acknowledged needs—social, cultural, economic, legal, political. Could even the most skillful leadership knit together a declaration that responded to them all?

Stabbing into the very heart of this question was an intellectual and political challenge from the communist nations. Reflecting Karl Marx’s contempt for individual civil and political rights as a cloak for capitalistic exploitation, the Soviet Union argued that the declaration should enshrine economic and social rights at its very apex. The American position, as one United States official admitted, was to emphasize individual rights by making the world charter a “carbon copy” of the American Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights.

To distill an international consensus out of these and other conflicting priorities clearly demanded leadership that was politically practical yet dedicated to achieving a truly global and visionary declaration. Almost miraculously, such leadership appeared in the American representative to the Human Rights Commission, an elderly, plainly dressed woman who often came to the sessions in New York by subway. Eleanor Roosevelt was a leader of immense prestige, patrician charm, endless patience, and great transactional skills. She led the drafting committee through tense, emotional debates, defending the American position yet seeking to conciliate the Soviets—as well as expressing her own principled recognition of the interdependence of wants—when she declared that “no personal liberty would exist without economic security and independence. Men in need were not free men.” Though the Russians responded stonily, in the end Eleanor Roosevelt coaxed a potentially transforming agreement out of the bickering delegates. No wonder that the General Assembly of the United Nations gave her a standing ovation, followed by its unanimous vote for the draft in December 1948.
To read the Universal Declaration more than half a century later, at the start of a new millennium, is to be struck again by its power—its scope, inclusiveness, explicitness, and absoluteness. Thus “everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person” and “no one shall be held in slavery or servitude.” And in the battle between democratic and communist conceptions of the priority of rights, civil and political rights were given precedence in the text over the socioeconomic rights necessary for “an existence worthy of human dignity,” such as rights to food and shelter, medical care, education, and work.

The human rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration were not merely a wish list of pieties to be displayed and soon forgotten. They represented people’s rightful claims on society and polity. Few celebrants were naïve enough to expect quick and heavy impact on the actual behavior of political leaders. Some leaders signed on with little intention of observing the declaration, or soon backslid on provisions they claimed threatened their “national sovereignty” or proved otherwise inconvenient. But there the declaration stood, proclaimed throughout the world as a standard against which the behavior of rulers could be measured from year to year and decade to decade.

In the broader view the charter would serve even more as a statement of global, public values with a potentially profound impact on the climate of expectations through which nations moved. It was a moral and philosophical document as well as a political one, setting out transforming ends toward which people might aspire.

Values, in the dictionary definition, are general concepts of “what is right, worthwhile or desirable; principles or standards.” They serve as “criteria for selection in action,” according to the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, as “criteria for judgment, preference, and choice.” And public values are the most powerful of principles because they represent the most broadly relevant, deeply felt, longest lasting, morally grounded commitments humankind can make. They are actually or potentially powerful causal forces. Public values such as liberty, justice, equality, happiness that have endured, flourished, and evolved over centuries, that are based in human wants and needs, that dominate people’s hopes and fears and expectations, that deeply influence their social and political attitudes and shape much of their day-to-day behavior—ultimately such values have
a huge causal effect. Virtually all the public values expressed in the Universal Declaration are both the cause and effect of generations of people with large stakes who have struggled to define and apply them.

The strengths of even the most potent values are enormously enhanced if they are part of a cultural value system, described by anthropologist Ethel M. Albert as “a summative construct in which the diverse value sets of individuals and groups are related as complementary elements of a single system.” In such a system, values not only exist side by side but intertwine and interact, immensely strengthening their collective impact. Order and liberty are different—even adversarial—public values but they fortify each other: order needs liberty to hold off oppression; liberty needs the order of a secure environment to thrive.

Despite its rather prosaic laying out of human rights, the Universal Declaration is itself a striking articulation of a complete system of public values. The declaration casts its net widely enough to include a diversity of values that reflect the wants and needs of people around the globe.

To see the Declaration of Human Rights as a system of public values is to define such values as the embodiment of meanings and policies that have direct and extensive impact on people, because based in fundamental human wants. These values are the supreme measures of the importance, quality, and impact of leadership. All leadership, wrote social philosopher Al Gini, “is value laden. And all leadership, whether good or bad, is moral leadership at the descriptive if not the normative level.” Joanne Ciulla, the noted ethicist, sees ethics, broadly defined, as lying at the heart of leadership. Yet can we leave the crucial question there? Some contend that the content or results of leadership cannot be tested because, in Joseph C. Rost’s words, there is no consensus as to the “higher moral ground” leaders can stand on. A century ago this argument could have carried some weight. Not today. Representatives of the nations of the earth have agreed on a set of values, of the most extensive and concrete nature, values that speak directly to leadership and its purpose—that declaration again.

All this does not mean that the declaration sits on such high ground that nations will agree on its interpretation and application. On the contrary, it offers a set of values on which people and parties are bound to disagree. But that conflict, that debate, will be conducted within a broad value system, so the issue will not be the values themselves but their in-
terpretation and implementation, which, as Eleanor Roosevelt had told the Human Rights Commission in 1948, “would necessarily vary from one country to another and such variations should be considered not only inevitable but salutary.” Fortuitously, as I write, a radio bulletin comes in that the Chinese cannot agree to a human rights agenda for an international conference because the West, with its emphasis on civil liberties, fails to acknowledge the needs of the Chinese people for “food and shelter.” So the debate goes on, but in the context of a world community pledged to the Universal Declaration.

Is leadership as a concept, then, inevitably values-based? Leadership scholar Ronald Heifetz furnished the best answer: “We cannot continue to have it both ways. We may like to use the word leadership as if it were value-free, particularly in an age of science and mathematics, so that we can describe far-ranging phenomena and people with consistency. Yet when we do so, we ignore the other half of ourselves that in the next breath speaks of leadership as something we desperately need more of. We cannot talk about a crisis in leadership and then say leadership is value-free... We have to take sides.” Or as my old Harvard professor Carl Friedrich liked to tell his students and later wrote: “To differentiate the leadership of a Luther from the leadership of a Hitler is crucial for a political science that is to ‘make sense’; if a political science is incapable of that, it is pseudo-science, because the knowledge it imparts is corrupting and not guiding.”

TRANSFORMING VALUES

As waves of change engulfed people in more recent eras, it was hard for some to imagine what life was like in the relatively unchanging societies of old. Yet stasis and continuity had been the norms of people’s lives for many centuries. They lived under all-embracing rulerships, dominated by a troika of hereditary kingships and established religions backed up by military power. Not that opposition and conflict were lacking. Dynastic ambitions, church-state rivalries, military plots, rabble-rousing heretics, ferocious peasant revolts ceaselessly threatened the feudal systems. But for century after century, in East and West, absolutism prevailed.

Why did impoverished peasants and suppressed townspeople fail to crack this edifice of power? Mainly because the rulers provided one indispensable value in times of external threat and internal turbulence: per-
sonal, familial, and community *security*. This was the moral foundation of a value system that underpinned huge and rigid political and religious hierarchies. Free speech, the rule of law, voting, dissent—these were beyond the ken of people imprisoned in a world dominated by religious creeds and authoritarian rule. The idea of opposition, even a “loyal” one, was anathema. Occasional dissenters of unimaginable courage and conviction were imprisoned, tortured, killed. Enraged and implacable, rulers ruled.

Rarely has an established rulership demonstrated its authority more convincingly than the papacy at Avignon—or more paradoxically, for these were pontiffs in exile. Early in the fourteenth century, Rome had fallen into such tumult that the papacy took refuge in southern France. There, decade after decade, the popes yearned to return to the Eternal City but continued to fear for their security there. Thus over the years they converted the Bishop’s Palace in Avignon into a massive religious and governmental fortification. Seven popes ruled on the banks of the Rhône until the brilliant diplomacy of Gregory XI made safe return to Rome possible in 1377.

Historians have wondered how papal rulers could decamp to a foreign city and pick up the reins of power there, during a century dominated by rival monarchies and rapacious principalities. The answer lay in the initiatives the Avignon popes took in boosting their financial resources (ostensibly to raise money for a final and triumphant Crusade), widening their control over thousands of ecclesiastical appointments, and conducting diplomacy on equal terms with kings. Bringing their moral authority wherever they resided, the popes based their constructive rulership firmly on their Christian values and on the principle that “the successor of St. Peter was the leader of the world.”

It would take an extraordinary combination of ideological, psychological, political, and moral force to bring down the medieval power structures. The assault was slow and uneven. The French revolted against their monarchy late in the eighteenth century, the Americans earlier against a British king, the Russians well over a century later. The British kept their Crown even as political processes began to be democratized. But the decline of the kingly and ecclesiastical rulers, along with the assault on their ideologies by a host of eighteenth-century thinkers and politicians, led to a new Western leadership based on a revolutionary set of values.

“We the People of the United States,” proclaimed a constitution in 1787 that set the “Blessings of Liberty” as its climactic value. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man two years later laid out “inalienable
rights" of "liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression." And two years after that, the Americans amended their Constitution to declare that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

British politicians were not so keen on formal declarations. Instead, poets spoke for Englishmen. William Wordsworth hailed

\[
\text{. . . the People having a strong band} \\
\text{In making their own Laws, whence better days} \\
\text{To all mankind.}
\]

And Shelley, in 1819, condemned "rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know, / But leech-like to their fainting country cling," and urged the people to assert their freedom—

\[
\text{Rise like Lions after slumber} \\
\text{In unvanquishable number—} \\
\text{Shake your chains to earth like dew} \\
\text{Which in sleep had fallen on you—} \\
\text{Ye are many—they are few.}
\]

* * *

As these intoxicating ideas fermented in the late eighteenth century, and as social and economic changes created new and vital linkages among people, broader roles for leadership were slowly unlocked as well. The old rulerships were engulfed in peaceful or violent change from within; some fell, if only temporarily, under the onslaught of Napoleonic armies and others. As ancient monarchies lost their footing, however, their one great value—security, or stability—was lost, too. Rapid change was the new order, as new men rose to power throughout the interstices of transformed political systems.

It was a time of contrasts. Much would be left unchanged, especially in the countryside. The man with the hoe and the woman with the scythe would continue to labor, as they do even unto this day. But there was a rising sense of personal efficacy as people gained opportunities to make their way free of the old state and church restraints. Human wants could now be expressed more openly. Needs could be recognized. Hopes and expectations could be indulged, at the risk of frustration and disappointment, as potentials for real change opened up even for the humble.
Since political activity was still sharply curbed in many countries, and the right to vote, where it was recognized, was limited to the propertied elite, the primary transformational dynamic lay in leaders reshaping followers' values and being spurred by their responses.

Was there any pattern in this early burgeoning of secular leaders preaching values? These were indeed initial efforts to shape and transform major ideas into an array of values that would provide the basis for collective political action, oppositional values that challenged the authority of the status quo. "The world out there" was simplified and condensed into concepts and experiences, hopes and grievances, that reframed conventional meanings and amounted to a call for transformational change. Initiatives were seized by political entrepreneurs who exploited injustices, thereby arousing both support and opposition and in turn stimulating political conflict over ideas. An early example of this process was the French Revolution and its impact inside and outside of France.

To an extraordinary degree European thinkers of that era were analyzing people's motivational forces. Some were thinking globally, at a time when they knew all too little about far-off cultures. A few were seeking general theories of wants and motivation and perception that would underlie the values of diverse peoples. Anthony Obersonall noted in the writings of eighteenth-century moral philosophers frequent references to the cultures of "Egyptians, Persians, Chinese, Turks, Arabs, Thais, American Indians—as well as to the deaf, dumb, and blind, wild boys found in the forest, orangutans and other apes, and the social animals such as ants and bees."

Were apes a bit of a reach? We now know that apes, like humans, have leadership and followership relationships, but we have little evidence that they share the values professed by Western moral philosophers!

The rise of more open, pluralistic societies both broadened and complicated the role of values-based leadership. In a democracy the deep and broad array of local groups poses a dilemma and an opportunity. Most of these groups are tiny leadership-followership entities. National leaders who want to mobilize people in the grass roots and in the streets naturally seek to attract support from local groups that offer them quick and direct access to active citizens and voters. But how to pursue the broadest and most fundamental public values while trying to satisfy parochial, "special-interest" concerns?
The only solution for would-be national leaders in democracies is to attempt to mobilize people behind values that powerfully express the wants and needs, hopes and expectations of large numbers of people. It is in the interactions and likely conflict between general values and more local interests that the opportunity for mobilization appears. In most democracies national leaders—liberals and radicals, conservatives and reactionaries—will compete over the proper interpretation and ordering of the supreme values of security, liberty, equality, justice, and community. To succeed, they will attempt to frame these values so as to bring the broadest range of local concerns within their embrace. In turn, as grassroots leaders already close to their constituents become more engaged with national leaders, their local interests are re-framed by the wider, deeper sphere of values. In the process, their followers are extended beyond narrow self-interests toward a broader view of the common good.

Such analysis relates mainly to developed democracies. Even in a theocratic state like today’s Iran, however, one can see the makings of a pluralistic and decentralized leadership structure that responds to national issues. In early 2000, reformist candidates for parliament in the religious city of Qum mobilized modest grassroots efforts, represented by simple campaign offices with one phone, storefronts with posters, talk-filled shops, a “women’s brigade.” Doubtless the city contained myriad other local groups waiting to “come out” against hard-line theocratic government. If a structure for democratic leadership developed in Iran, these local leadership potentials would be energized and empowered, creating the conditions for a nationwide conflict over values that might transform the country and its people.

EMPOWERING VALUES

Leaders embrace values; values grip leaders. The stronger the value systems, the more strongly leaders can be empowered and the more deeply leaders can empower followers. The transformational dynamic that mutually empowers leaders and followers involves, as we have seen, wants and needs, motivation and creativity, conflict and power. But at its heart lie values.

Can we build a model, stripped down to essentials and beginning with a relatively static situation, of the role of values in the rise and fall of leadership seeking to achieve real, intended, comprehensive, and lasting change?
Transforming Leadership

1. The relatively stable status quo begins to be undermined by change—for instance, population growth and migration, economic innovations or decline, altered social relations—and people develop new material and psychological wants. The failure of the inheritors of the established order to address such significant social changes effectively, to acknowledge and act on these new wants, produces fissures and dissonances that generate creative thinking about needs and values.

2. Activists—would-be leaders—take the initiative by recognizing people's new wants as legitimate needs and articulating them as values.

3. Activists compete with one another for the support of followers. To gain the broadest support, they frame grievances and promises of specific change in terms of values.

4. Activists seek to organize and lead groups, movements, and parties. Followers become arrayed in larger and larger aggregations, supporting general values as well as specific policies.

5. Activists gain leadership positions by responding to followers' wants and needs adequately, and followers will demand more. If leaders respond inadequately to heightened expectations and demands, followers will seek changes in the leadership.

6. Activists who gain office, and hence become leaders with constituencies, discover the limitations of formal power. They must not only gauge the needs and hopes of their followers, expressed as broad and compelling values, but they must have the skill to mobilize resources to satisfy them.

7. Value systems splinter under the pressure of heightened expectations and demands. Followers themselves become leaders throughout the society and act as both consolidating and divisive forces.

8. In a democracy, the crucial issue becomes the power and legitimacy of an opposition capable of taking over office, redefining values to better address people's needs, and governing. If such a transfer fails, conflict degenerates into multiple warring groups, the rise of extremists, a breakdown of the relationship between leaders and followers, and the collapse of the value system.

In this kind of scenario, values play a central role in binding would-be leaders and followers, broadening moral frames of reference, and serving variously as a needed unifying and dividing force.
Values strengthen the whole fabric of leadership by helping to sustain the mobilization and deepen the empowerment of followers during competition and conflict.

Values strengthen leaders' capacity to reach out to wider audiences and to gain support for broader arrays of values and for value systems, and ultimately empower leaders by constituting a foundation for governing.

Addressing fundamental questions of human nature, values help to clarify the relations between individualism and collectivism, self-interest and altruism, liberty and equality—issues at the heart of political conflict—and in the process establish a leadership agenda for action.

In sum, values are power resources for a leadership that would transform society for the fuller realization of the highest moral purposes.

Of all these functions, the mobilizing and kindling power of transforming values is the most essential and durable factor in leadership. Addressing the needs and hopes of millions of people, leaders seek to transcend everyday brokerage and bargaining in order to rally followers behind those values. Once that engagement is made, leaders and the people they mobilize can empower one another more and more as people's material needs and visionary hopes are met—and as long as the power holders are challenged by a loyal opposition that will keep them honest. Values by themselves are mere words, or symbols, until backed by empowerment, but the same values, sharpened by ideological conflict in a democracy, empower those who know how to lead.

Above all, values—operationalized, claimed as rights, empowering leaders and followers—are weapons. Not mere decorations on monuments or flourishes in statesmen's speeches, the great public values of the Enlightenment, woven into people's aspirations and expectations, are the weapons of a transforming leadership that would enhance their security and liberty, and so expand their opportunities to pursue happiness.

The clues to the mystery of leadership lie in a potent equation: embattled values grounded in real wants, invigorated by conflict, empower leaders and activated followers to fashion deep and comprehensive change in the lives of people. The acid test of this empowerment is whether the change is lasting or whether it is temporary and even reversible. Deep and durable change, guided and measured by values, is the ultimate purpose of transforming leadership, and constitutes both its practical impact and its moral justification.

And that is the power of values.