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The Megacommunity Manifesto

by Mark Gerencser, Fernando Napolitano, and Reginald Van Lee

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**Public, private, and civil leaders
should confront together the
problems that none can solve alone.**

Leaders everywhere no longer express as much confidence about the future as they once did. When they speak candidly, it often sounds as if they feel trapped in quicksand, unable to move forward easily. The methods and tools that helped them succeed in the past no longer work. The challenges they face — such as global competitiveness, health and environmental risks, or inadequate infrastructure — can no longer be solved by their organizations alone. And when they try to reach beyond the boundaries of their own corporation, government agency, or nongovernmental organization, there often is no clear pathway to success.

In multinational corporations, for example, “everybody is frozen,” says American Express Chairman and CEO Kenneth Chenault. “What has not kept pace in the business world is an understanding of how the uncer-

tainty of the geopolitical environment has impacted business.” The ability to seize opportunities or make a profit often depends on unfamiliar and unpredictable factors, such as the reputation of the company and its grasp of changing trends.

Meanwhile, governments, which were previously relied upon to manage the problems of public society, can no longer spend or regulate their way into requisite solutions. “In the past, corporations could depend on the fact that government defined the answers,” says Stephen Merrill, formerly the governor of New Hampshire and currently president of Bingham Consulting Group LLC. But now, he says, business leaders are afraid that “government doesn’t even understand the questions.”

Moreover, there is a subtle but detectable waning